

# **Irish Writing**

THE MAGAZINE OF  
CONTEMPORARY IRISH LITERATURE



Edited by

**DAVID MARCUS**

and

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## Jimmy One-Leg

**T**UMBLING head over heels like a circus clown, he fell into the Liffey. The waters, bright in the sparkling sunlight, quivered as his shadow came toppling over them and rapidly dwindled into the solid block of body as it struck the surface. Spluttering with tiny rage he disappeared below the shaking waters. Thick and oily, they folded around him, and he beat at them with his fist, screaming in his panic. He rose, kicking frantically, and saw the startled crowd at the dockside. The other kids were there too. And the grown-up people; the idlers from the Customs House porch, the Guinness boatmen; and the men and women crossing over Butte Bridge, they all surged around, clambering over the Guinness barrels, running down the stone steps to him, calling to each other, pointing, clamouring. He saw the hundreds of faces crowding around him, and then irrelevantly he heard the high whistle and the heavy rattling of the train as it hurtled over the viaduct from Amiens Street to Tara Street and the seaside places. Above the rattle of the train he heard their voices shouting, calling him.

"Jimmy One-Leg!"

"Jimmy One-Leg!"

And again the urge came over him to do his fantastic dance. Twirling, turning against the heavy waters, he sank below the surface, his head light with the rhythm of his dance, the dance that people laughed at, the dance that gave him his name.

Once again he was coming down Summerhill in the morning with the sun on the street. The women were all out for their shopping after ten mass in Gardiner Street. Standing in their little groups at the corners and at shop windows, they watched Jimmy come twirling along, his arms folded, one leg in the air, and he spinning on the other like a dervish.

"Look at him, Gawd help us! Jimmy One-Leg!"



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"Gawd help the pore boy. Your shouldn't be callin' him names, Mary. It's not right."

"Gawd forgive me, sure me tongue slipped. That's what the youngsters calls him."

Jimmy went twirling by, his head in the air, his heart in his arms. Outside an ice-cream shop he stopped and looked in.

"How much are the ha'penny cornets, Mrs. Clancy?" he shouted into the doorway.

Mrs. Clancy was a big fat woman with a bad leg. One day she had fallen down the old stairs at the back, and they thought she would never be able to stand again. But the doctors up at the Mater did a grand job on her, and there she was as fat and as jolly as ever with only a bit of a drag on her left foot. She came along the counter, leaning her weight on her good leg.

"Will you come in out of that?" she shouted. "Don't tell me it's shy you are!"

She leaned over to look at the little fellow in the doorway.

"Come in, and do your dance for me, Jimmy, and maybe I'll give you one for nothing," she called.

"Oh, I couldn't do my dance for less than a wafer," said Jimmy sturdily.

Mrs. Clancy laughed heartily, agitating her heavy bosom.

"All right, Jimmy, all right. I'll give you the wafer," she said.

So Jimmy danced. Quite suddenly, in one movement, he folded his arms, lifted himself on one toe like a ballerina, holding the other foot in the air. Then in ever quickening circles he began to revolve about the shop, crooning a little tune all the time. A few of the women came in. They stood at the counter, looking at him.

"Cross the Lord, will you look at him? How does he do it?"

"Gawd help the pore unfortunate! That's what comes of not having a proper mother and father."

"Look at him! I declare to God, I don't think he even sees us!"

Jimmy went turning, twirling, all about the shop. Then suddenly he came to a stop right beside the ice-cream refrigerator, and held out his hand.

"Right y'are, Jimmy, right y'are." Mrs. Clancy lumbered down towards him.

He went out to the street, licking at the ice-cream. A little girl came through the door just as he was leaving. He gave her a sudden shove, and knocked her on the floor. Then he



led down the hill towards Parnell Street, leaving the indignant cries behind him.

"Well, the good-for-nothing little brute!"

"The badnatured thing!"

"Sure he has no nature at all in him! Look at pore Rosey, Gawd help her!"

"There, Rosey, don't be crying now. That Jimmy is a brat, that's what he is."

And to Jimmy running down the hill, the loud voices become soft and distant like a confused memory of the past. And now in the swirling waters it was the same. The shouting voices, the faces were a jumble of past voices and past faces.

And all these faces seemed very much alike, very much of a pattern. They leaned over him, crowded together, laughing and calling jocosely to him. Then suddenly they changed, and began spitting and shouting spitefully at him. They waved their fists threateningly at him, and he could feel the hot rage surge through his body. It was like the day he had beaten Molly Wilson outside Brooks Thomas's timber yard.

It was one of those clear cold days in autumn when the sun throws long shadows on the street. Jimmy was dancing down Abbey Street with his queer little tune on his lips. People hurrying about their business threw quick pitying glances at him, but Jimmy did not notice them. With his head in the air he passed along the street. Near Beresford Place a few men coming from the Labour Exchange stood to watch him. Jimmy, feeling his audience, danced unconcernedly, a pleased little smile on his lips. He twirled and twisted in front of Brooks Thomas's yard, his shadow bobbing up and down beside him like an impish partner. He went faster and faster as the men began laughing and clapping their hands in accompaniment. Then through his brain pierced a shrill voice.

"Look at, sissy! It's Jimmy One-Leg. Look at him dancing!"

He saw Molly Wilson hurry across the road towards him, dragging her little sister by the hand. He stopped dancing abruptly. He darted forward, and cut through the men to meet Molly as she reached the pavement.

He gave her a quick, stinging slap across the face with his hand.

"Don't 'Jimmy' me," he panted. "Don't 'Jimmy' me."

Quickly and mercilessly he began to thump Molly's back with his hard little fist. The men were too startled to do anything for a moment or two, and Molly had collapsed on the path with Jimmy still hitting her ruthlessly, before they jumped on

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him and dragged him away.

"You little devil! Is that the way to treat a girl?"

"Let go, you bloody little rat!"

"Christ, I'll split you, you little——"

Jimmy tore away from their grasp, and ran around the corner and up Gardiner Street. He ran panting, with the men's angry shouts and Molly's shrill sobbing trembling in his ears. His lips quivered with rage as he ran.

"I'll 'Jimmy' her," he muttered.

In his brain he could feel the vindictive echo of his muttering. Some memory, dark and elusive, tugged at him. A man with his fist upraised was shouting angrily. And he could feel the fist thumping, thumping, and the woman's screams as each blow struck her back.

He stopped, panting, at the corner of Parnell Street, and found there was no one following him. Then he ran all the way home to his aunt, his deep-set brown eyes hard and dead and his mouth in a tight little line across his face.

Running home, he could feel himself slipping slowly below the surface again. The waters, thick and soapy, clung cajolingly to him. He tried to push them from him, but his arms and legs were becoming leaden and tired. Then, through the faces above him, he could see one quite clearly and distinctly. He shouted to his mother, but she did not hear him. Then her face became indistinct and distant again. Another face, a man's face, came towards him. He was terrified, and yet he could not resist struggling towards this man. It was the man who had come to his home one day after his mother had died.

Jimmy was coming down the stairs, and he met him coming up. He was broad, strongly-built man with light brown hair like a woman's and piercing brown eyes. He caught Jimmy by the arm.

"Listen, youngster," he said. "You know anyone of the name of Foley? Miss Lucia Foley?"

Jimmy shook his head.

"There's no woman of that name living here," he said. "My mother's name was Foley, but she's dead. She is dead over four months now," he said.

The man looked at him.

"Your mother?" he said. "She's dead four months, you say?"

"That's right, mister," said Jimmy, trying to edge past him. But the man remained holding him arm, and looking at him. Jimmy felt uncomfortable under his staring, probing eyes.

Then the man turned abruptly, and went down the stairs. Jimmy followed behind, sensing the acrid odour of stale tobacco and drink.

In the street the man turned around to him again.

"Say, how'd you like to come along and see a real big ship?" he said, grinning. "How'd you like it, eh son?"

Jimmy nodded his head delightedly.

So they went down the town towards the North Wall and the ships. They went the long way down to the docks, through Parnell Street and down the length of O'Connell Street to Eden Quay, because the man said it was many years since he was in Dublin and he could not see enough of it. Jimmy was impatient, and pulled his hand to make him hurry, but the man just laughed and said the ship would wait for them. Going down O'Connell Street, passing the Gresham and the Savoy, he told Jimmy all sorts of stories about the strange lands he had been in and the queer people that lived in them. The more Jimmy heard, the more he wanted to hurry down to the ship. And when they came to the Alexandra Basin he was hopping up and down with delight. A policeman walked by, and Jimmy stuck his head high in the air, completely unafraid.

They came to the ship, which leaned above them at the quayside. There was a long, steep gangway leading to the deck, and Jimmy ran up it in a moment. When the man came to the deck, he found Jimmy twirling in ecstasy like a dervish.

There was no one on the deck but the boy, and only the man who had brought him saw him dance. It was a wild, exultant dance, wilder and more free than the dances he was wont to do about the streets and the shops. He was crooning too, a queer, wordless sort of song which if it had words would not be English, but strange Spanish or Moorish words.

The man stood looking at him, nodding his head in accompaniment of the swaying little figure and the strange, wordless singing. His hard eyes were softer, less fierce as he looked on the little dancer, and he moved forward as if to hold him, to capture him in the very height of his singing and dancing and hold him there. But as he moved towards the boy, Jimmy came twirling over towards him, and suddenly bent before him on one knee.

"For my master, Jimmy," he said, and he could feel the mocking, daring laughter which was not his leave him and smack the intent man who looked down on him.

He saw the man shake his head like a dog who has been struck, and the queer hard light come into his eye. He saw him coming towards him with his hand upraised. The upraised



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hand of his dreams thumped down on him, and he felt the screams which were not his shriek out of him. He fled down the gangway shrieking, with the wild devil of a man thumping after him.

He raced down the long, lonely length of the Alexandra Basin, hearing the heavy steps behind him become lighter and lighter as they faded in the distance.

And now the man's face began to fade from him, and it became no longer necessary to push through the water to it. He realised quite clearly that there would be no need to dance any more, no need ever again to fear that terrible compelling urge to strike girls who came near him. There would never be anything else to do but lie in this water, and let it lick around him. The crowded faces slipped away one by one, and the quayside became still and terribly bare. An aching loneliness seized him as he gazed on the vast bareness about him, and quietly he slid below the comforting waters.

The crowd around the quayside saw him disappear from their sight too quickly for them to do anything. He had drowned before the first of them had even reached the bottom step by the water. A man dived in, but he came to the surface a moment later in bewilderment. He dived again, and again, and had at last to drag himself back to the quayside, where he turned and looked back at the shaking, triumphant waters.

"My God," said someone, "did you ever see anything as sudden as that?"

"'Twas like his pore mother, the Lord have mercy on her unfortunate soul. Didn't they drag the Liffey for eight days before they found her!"

## PETER HILL



### County Folk

THE Stewarts arrived at ten thirty; late considering that they had now to drive thirty-five miles. Patricia had been sitting in her evening-frock in the drawing-room for hours, watching mother playing Patience and father smoking his pipe over some book about horses. She had been thinking about Bruce. She could not see him. Although her one wish was to see him she could see nothing but a reddish face and a moustache; and Bruce had been much more. She and her mother conversed nervously about nothings, as if they were expecting terrible news, or someone upstairs was dying, or Patricia was leaving home to seek her fortune in the World, or leaving to meet her lover back from the Wars. This last, she kept on realising with a shock, *was* what she was doing.

At nine o'clock Mrs. Fitzgerald turned on the News, softly so that it would not infuriate father. To those who listened without prejudice it was the year 1948 and the world was near to a war to end all wars, but it was hard not to be prejudiced in a house in the midst of County Kildare. Conferences were being held, and Notes exchanged; but in Kildare the rain falls softly upon the green fields and upon the cows that stand with their backs to the wind, and the sky is streaked with flying blue-back clouds, and the streams are so full that they provide a perpetual accompaniment to an unchanging world. Only in some of the houses, as in the Fitzgeralds', there are photographs of men in the uniforms of two wars, often three, as a reminder that the news means something even here. There was a photograph of Patricia's brother, Bob, who was killed in the R.A.F. in the Second World War and of her uncle, Fred, who was killed in the First. But mother still listened to the news to read peace into every conference and note.

The Stewarts arrived at ten-thirty, and Patricia, sitting in a

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red dress in an armchair had for some time been longing to go upstairs, take off the red dress and slip into bed; yes, in spite of Bruce, for after all she could not see him. The Stewarts, he in tails and she in a black satin gown and silver-fox fur, were at the top of their form. They had a drink. Father had risen from his chair in his ragged tweed coat, put down his pipe, and poured it out for them. Father was being almost obsequious. So even he expected this to be *her* night, and blessed the Stewarts for having a Bentley!

Like Bruce, Colonel "Reggie" Stewart had been in the Guards. He was over six feet tall and very broad, and his voice was always raised. His wife was tall, thin and beautiful, and her voice made a grating sound. They both had much to say. At first it was about the Smith O'Gradys and the home-coming of Bruce. Then it expanded. Reggie had bought a hell of a fine bay gelding of whom he had great hopes, and Charlie was making plans for London as soon as the season recommenced. Their conversation, therefore, almost clashed, but only in a humorous way. At home it had been different.

It was beginning to appear as if they would never leave when Reggie finally downed his glass of nearly neat Irish whiskey and said that they had better be getting along. Mother and Father came to the door and said good-night. Mother made it sound like Good Luck, but father wore a mask of indifference. Unreasonably she liked him for it, while mother's participation was irritating.

The Bentley lay like a slug shining with dew at the bottom of the steps. The three of them sat comfortably in front on the shining brown-leather seat, Charlie on the outside, Patricia captured by two Stewarts. Then, with mother standing under the light and waving, smoothly and silently they were off.

The car travelled at fifty on the narrow road. Its headlights turned it into daylight from hedge to hedge, from wall to wall. Now and then the dark-green trees that stood at either side stretched across to embrace in an arch above them. Reggie seldom troubled to dim the lights. The natives of this green and desert land, old farmers holding bicycles, young farmers holding girls, stood dazzled, unable to see and appreciate the Bentley or the evening-dress of the passengers.

To Patricia the night was peculiarly made of foxes. Her left cheek was constantly brushed by the long silver-black hairs of the fox that hung about Charlie's shoulders, and at the end of the bonnet of the car a silver-model of a fox stood and guided them along the winding road. The model held Patricia's eyes hypnotically as it bobbed from side to side, and almost in a



trance all the time she tried to determine her attitude to what was to come. But the more she essayed to direct her thoughts ahead the more they retreated.

Patricia and Bruce became engaged on his last leave. They had grown up together; for although the Smith O'Gradys lived thirty-five miles away, this, in the country, is a neighbourly distance. Countless times they had hunted together, been to the races together, been seen together. She had been to school in England with his two sisters. The attachment had many links, and not the least of these was a physical attraction, for it was not merely a neighbourly engagement. Yet now she could only properly recall the neighbourliness; the other she remembered but could not feel. Profoundly-moving experiences were erased as if they had been superficial. It was inexplicable, and frightening.

She had never looked at anyone else; Bruce was so obviously the best of the "set." Bruce, while knowing the importance of hunt balls, county weddings, knew how to take an interest in other things. He bought pictures. When last home he had bought two paintings, originals, by Paul Henry of scenes in the West of Ireland; most people, if they had them at all, only had copies. He read books. Last Christmas he had sent her "None but the Rose," and "April Lover" by Lucilla Drake. Yes, he was a wonderful person. To regard him as an ordinary, desiring man had always seemed a cheapness.

"What does Pat think?" said Reggie loudly.

"I'm so sorry—what were you saying?" she asked.

"We think we're lost," replied Charlie, loud and grating.

"Oh dear!" she said. "Oh, dear, how wonderful—let's get lost, lost, lost; yes, even with Charlie and Reggie, let's get lost!"

"It's all right ladies. Don't worry your fair heads," said Reggie, "I'll ask this fellow."

A man wheeling a bicycle was caught by the headlights and pinned to the side of the road. Nervously peering into the radiance from under his cap he saw that he was required.

"I say," said Reggie, "have you any notion where we can find Ballydermot House. It's the Smith O'Gradys' place. It should be somewhere on this road."

"Yis," said the man, "now wait till I tell yeh. . . ." He pushed the cap up on his forehead. "Yeh take the first turn to the left at the next crossroads, and then yeh keep straight on till yeh see the Church on the left and then it's the first house with the big white geates on the right."

"Good man," said Reggie, "that's fine. Good-night."

"Good-night," said the man. The Bentley pulled away.

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Patricia reflected that a few years ago the man would have said "Good-night sorr." She was glad. She tried to see them as the man had seen them. She could not find an answer; they were either disgusting or impressive. She wondered if Charlie or Reggie ever asked themselves this question, ever, ever; she could not answer this either. She was a little proud of being sensitive, self-critical. Then she was ashamed, because having chosen a part one must play it with heart; the Stewarts at least knew this.

It would have been truer to have said that such complications did not exist for Charlie and Reggie. Reggie, driving much too fast now to see any Church on the left, said,

"Of course these fellows will tell you anything. . . The first thing that comes into their heads!"

"Yes, darling," agreed Charlie, "but it's rather charming."

White cottages with thatch, grey cottages with slates, mossy banks, bramble hedges, stone walls, decayed signposts, vast chestnut trees, men, dogs and bicycles, and, yes, a Church, a ruin covered with ivy, but definitely a Church, sped by. "Slow darling, for God's sake," said Charlie. But too late; big white gates on the right appeared and were gone, and Reggie with one hand on the wheel brought the Bentley to a screaming halt one hundred yards beyond. "Bloody hell!" he said. He backed the car with amazing skill, and they were in through the gates and on to the drive in an instant and the hope that had been aroused in Patricia was gone and her heart was sinking fast.

The drive—she knew it well—seemed endless. In wide bends it passed between the great and ancient trees, and round every bend Patricia expected without reason to see the house. Similes rushed through her mind: going back to school, going into hospital with appendicitis, hunting for the first time. They were inappropriate to a lovers' reunion. The Stewarts—it was their most usual condition, she decided,—were unaware. They hoped that the party would be up to scratch. They hoped that they were neither too early nor too late. If they were aware they disguised it well. Mercilessly they swept into the semi-circle of drive in front of the hall-door, among all the shining slugs that were there assembled.

The porch was in darkness and the curtains of the house were drawn. From behind these came an uproar of voices. On the strip of grass in front of the drawing-room windows stood a group of young men and girls, with several children and old men. They stood motionless and silent, watching. Patricia hated them and hated herself. She hurried inside with the

Stewarts. She hated them too.

Mr. and Mrs. Smith O'Grady stood inside the hall-door, unaware of hate, and shook hands with their guests. They were kindly people, and Mrs. Smith O'Grady gave Patricia a special look and a special squeeze of the hand to say that *they* knew what the party was really about. Then she turned and looked across the hall which was full of people who stood about with champagne and soup and sandwiches in their hands, and to the broad back of a tall and handsome man she said, "Bruce. Patricia's here."

He turned and came quickly. He was excited and happy. "Hullo Pat," he said, his eyes twinkling, "it's been a long time."

"Yes," she said, looking deeply at him, at his reddish face and moustache, through him, through his pseudo-arrogance, "much too long." She was astonished by her self-composure. It made no sense after the agony.

They said no more. She and Charlie went upstairs, leaving Reggie to tell Bruce about the new bay gelding. Pretty young girls and handsome young men were sitting fashionably upon the stairs and they had to apologise for walking there. Then as they reached the landing Patricia looked down across the hall, across the kaleidoscope of many-coloured dresses, white ties and tails, across to where Bruce stood and listened to Reggie. He was decidedly attractive. Did she still love him? She could not say.

The ladies-room was a bedroom that none of the family occupied, and which Patricia had never seen. A four-poster stood at the far end of the room from the door, an anachronism used only by the mice that scampered around the top. The walls were a dark-blue that must have been very gloomy in the day-time but now formed a dramatic background, because the room was illumined by large candles that stood upon tables and upon the dressing-table where four mirrors reflected them in a golden light. Charlie sat at the dressing-table and prepared her face while Patricia wandered about the room. She was aware that it had a distinctive smell; so had the house; she had noticed it when they came in. It was a good smell, a country smell, a smell of turf, of mildew, of candlegrease, of crude tobacco, of polished leather and brass, a smell that dealt roughly with the fake smells that lay shining in little pots and bottles upon the dressing-table or secreted about the bodies of the handsome men and women downstairs. The pictures upon the walls were good pictures too, in the same sense; old prints of hunting-scenes, old caricatures of hunting-folk, and above the mantelpiece a gentleman in a pink coat and velvet cap.



Every picture directly or indirectly, was a tribute to the Horse, who was ruler here, and to the nobility and healthiness of his rule. They made Patricia look noble and healthy too, but that would never do, so as soon as Charlie had finished she sat down at the mirror and put on some make-up.

Charlie left the room, saying that they would meet down in the hall. She sat at the mirror, gazing in astonishment. She had put on powder but that did not explain why her face was suddenly deathly white. Then she realised that she was gazing not at herself but at the image of the darkness behind her head. Why she felt like this she would never understand. She was not a sensitive person; and it was merely darkness and flickering candlelight. She sat transfixed, watching it, watching it. She wanted Bruce and almost called out for him. There was silence; not a sound of music or conversation. She was alone, apart. She was not merely out of hearing of the party. She knew that she and the room were away in space and time and yet, curiously, that the music and conversation were near. It was terrifying. Then suddenly a face appeared behind her's in the mirror, so suddenly that she tried to scream but could only gasp. But it was not a ghost; it was Bruce.

He put his arms around her and kissed her on the nape of the neck. Overcome with relief she did not realise what he was doing. He gently raised her up and they stood face to face.

"Why so frightened?" he asked.

"Nothing . . ."

"You thought it was a ghost I suppose?"

"Yes."

He laughed.

"Perhaps I am," he said. "A ghost come back to haunt you. Am I?"

"No."

"You don't sound very sure."

"Kiss me," she said.

As they were leaving the room, moved by a whim she pulled his arm and made him face the painting of the gentleman in the pink coat.

"Who was he?" she asked.

"He was my great-uncle," he said, "Matthew Bruce Smith O'Grady. You may notice that he has the family colouring."

"And the moustache," she added.

"Exactly. And very handsome too."

They laughed.

They came out on to the landing. Having already looked

across the people below in the hall to discover who they were, she could look at them now with disinterest, with fantasy. She came out on Bruce's arm full of whims, full of fantasy; she loved him. The people were heads of corn, identical, a field of them, as decorative, as irrevocable. It was not a fancy as much as a trick of the memory, for she had spent the afternoon lying in a corn-field watching the heads moving in the breeze. They were a pretty sight, and so were the guests of the Smith O'Gradys. The women wore strapless evening gowns and some of them tiaras, and all had put on self-possession, whilst their men were sleek and proudly attentive; the night was young. Bruce guided her, smiling, privately enjoying her fancy, through the cornfield to the side of the wide, white tablecloth behind which stood four men in white aprons who were doing their best for the harvest.

They drank champagne, excellent champagne, and they clinked glasses and whispered "To us."

People gathered round to talk to them, some to give congratulations again. Patricia inwardly gave thanks that she could accept them. But she and Bruce gave nothing to the conversation, because neither had been to the Day's Races. (This was the opening gambit of the night). But they enjoyed their shared ignorance. Bruce had arrived from England that evening; Patricia had spent the afternoon in a cornfield, trying to prepare herself for the agony that had not been an agony.

"I was told to back that damn Ballybrophy Thing," someone was saying to Bruce, "and like a fool I let Fitz put me off it." But Bruce had left to dance with Patricia.

A band of three in white coats gone grey beat out old waltzes. They were *the* Band of the nearest town. Patricia knew two of them by name, and Johnny Reddin who dominated with the accordeon she knew in person because he came to help when they were short of men at home on the farm. He smiled at her and tried to squeeze new life from the accordeon, but his colleagues were not co-operating. Yet it was wonderful; Patricia thought it wonderful. Bruce was a magnificent dancer and they waltzed and waltzed under the chandelier—(there was only one, but it was a good one)—and about the long, old room in which there was the same good smell and the same "good" pictures. There were also large mirrors upon the walls, tasteless and full of character, so that the dancers saw themselves and found the sight admirable.

There were others to see them. The room was at a corner of the house and so there were windows in two walls, and at each window spectators had gathered. Their faces were pressed

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tight to the glass, faces full of most varying emotions. Patricia was aware of them. In Bruce's arms she liked to be watched. Oh blessed continuity; nothing in a hundred years was different, nothing except—she noticed as they swung by—the radio that stood in the corner.

But the night had to pass. The Band became sleepier and their white coats more and more grey. The soup and sandwiches were almost consumed, and the champagne was consumed to the last bottle and people began to look less decorative. Mr. and Mrs. Smith O'Grady, most tired of all and not sure whether it had been worthwhile, came back to take up their places at the halldoor, to receive the thanks that their guests moulded and brought forth from minds that even when fresh were not creative. Those of them who had conquered sleep and champagne wondered at the absence of the son of the house for whom the party had been given, but most of them understood. The rooms emptied. The portraits took over. The Band replaced the instruments in their worn black cases. The watchers at the windows went home arm in arm, the old men and small children having departed long ago. The four men who had replenished the cornfield untied their white aprons, folded them and put them into cardboard attaché-cases, while the sleepy servant-girls, whom they ignored as lower-ranking menials, hunted for cups and plates and glasses. In the largest drawing-room there had been a turf fire; it was a heap of ashes. The night was over; but not for Patricia and Bruce. They were upstairs in Bruce's dressing-room.

Charlie had found Reggie in tête-a-tête with his fifth charming young girl and persuaded him to leave. She would permit no more promises to be "ready in a minute" or—"I'm just coming darling." She had had the hell of an evening on a sofa with a very fat man called Toby Young who had insisted that she stay with him and, being very strong and intoxicated, had been irresistible. Moreover, he had been her first husband—(Reggie was her third)—and she feared a scene. God it was tedious! He talked for hour after hour about his present wife, who was at the party but kept to another room; she had been married to a Viscount and had decided finally that the change was for the worse. It was not surprising. It was not interesting. It was just damn boring. And now of course Patricia was not to be found; away with that ass of a man, positive pain-in-the-neck Bruce. God help the poor girl! But she was really just as stupid so it was probably a sensible match. "Let them just break it up for to-night," thought



Charlie. "Let us all get home to our warm and comfortable beds."

"For God's sake go and find Patricia or we'll be here till doomsday," she said to Reggie.

"Right," he said, rubbing his hands; he had spent a wonderful evening. "Where is she?"

"Upstairs I suppose, with him," replied Charlie.

"With who?"

"With Bruce, you idiot."

"Oh. . . Right."

He turned and went to the stairs, took them three at a time and upon reaching the landing roared.

"Pa-tric-ia! Bruce! Patricia?"

He passed out of sight.

There were a number of gusests still about the hall, making a certain amount of noise, but the Smith O'Gradys as they shook hands heard these cries and shuddered, and many of the guests as they prepared to shake hands heard them too and thought that Reggie was overdoing it rather. Charlie stood with them and reflected that Reggie in a good mood was a bloody awful nuisance.

After some minutes Reggie, Patricia and Bruce came down together, Reggie between the others with an arm about each. All three were exceedingly pleased with themselves, thought Charlie, and Patricia was unabashed and had of course no understanding that people had been hanging about for hours waiting for Her Ladyship.

"Found the lost sheep," bellowed Reggie to the company.

Charlie said nothing. Bruce joined his parents at the door and everyone said good-night, Bruce and Patricia in a lingering way, and Mrs. Smith O'Grady gave Patricia a special squeeze of the hand to say that *they* knew what the party had really been about.

"See you to-morrow, Pat," said Bruce as the three guests stepped out into a cold, windy morning. It was almost light, the most bitter and unfriendly time. They got quickly into the Bentley, and Charlie, shivering inside her silver-fox, put up her window and told Reggie to do the same. As they moved away down the sweep of the drive Reggie, steering with his left hand, said,

"Great party . . . Eh, darling?"

"Rotten, I thought," said Charlie, her voice more grating than ever.

Patricia was shocked. She could not bear to hear *her* party, her wonderful party so described. She stayed quiet.

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"Oh come off it," replied Reggie, unmoved, "you were doing fine. Couldn't separate the old Toby-jug to-night. What do you two talk about anyway?"

"None of your business," said Charlie.

"The party was all right for Pat, eh?"

"Oh fine," answered Patricia.

"Our little friend is getting married pretty soon."

"Really," said Charlie.

"Yes. We hope so," said Patricia. They had no doubt of it.

The three were silent, watching the road in the headlights, watching the silver-model of the fox. White cottages, grey cottages, mossy banks, bramble hedges, stone walls, decayed signposts, vast chestnut-trees sped by, but men, dogs and bicycles were all in bed. The three were sleepy. They were content not to speak. Reggie was thinking about a blonde in a green dress. Charlie was trying to find a reason, one reason, for preferring Toby Young to Reggie, and was angry with herself and both of them that she could not find one. Patricia closed her eyes and thought about Bruce; about his superiority to other men, about the way he kissed her, about his dancing, his love of books and pictures, his strong arms. Above all she tried to see him; and the curious fact was that although she concentrated with all her strength, and although she had only just left him, she could see nothing but a reddish face and a moustache.

RICHARD KELL

## Chariots

Day was unkind to these——

emphasising the sullen grime-etched face,  
the droop of blinkered heads, the imperative bit,  
imposing a heavy load and a tortoise-pace.

Dusk flicks a generous wand;

like a reminiscence the empty coal-carts spill  
from the dimness as though from entombed antiquity,  
to claim their lordly moment down the hill.

Four in a daredevil race

pass dark shuttles of rhythm through twilight's loom.  
These swaying taut silhouettes are the bodies that sagged,  
indifference now has burst to a sudden bloom

of zest. Sleek necks outstretched,

a rhyme of limbs where an ancient instinct moves,  
waking a ghost of thunder from dead arenas,  
the horses spatter jewels from stabbing hooves.



## JAMES PLUNKETT



# The Web

WHEN the Black and Tan lorry left the strand road to swing instead towards the centre of the town, the Dummy was lounging at the corner house. All evening he had stood there in the mild warmth of the October sunlight, and though he was startled he did not move. But when the lorry passed close to him his eyes narrowed and his head inclined slightly towards the wide strand on his left. He counted the turns. The engine slowed, revved, dropped again. It was going towards Freddie's house. By the time it stopped completely he was hammering loudly at one of the small cottages which faced the strand. There was no answer. He sucked his thumb and looked over his shoulder. About half a mile out in the centre of the pool-pocked sands two men were digging for bait. Their bent figures were diminutive with distance. Beyond them he could see the first foamy ridge of water and then the barracks at the extreme end of the breakwater towards which the lorry should normally have gone. He began to force the part-open window. Niall was standing at the foot of a disordered bed. He held a revolver which pointed at the window. The skin over his cheek bones and about his mouth was tight, and he held his gun steadily.

"I heard them," he said. "Tell Waxer."

The Dummy nodded and went swiftly through the hallway. In the kitchen he passed Mrs. Ryan. She had a loaf and a knife in her hands and her face was white. She followed him with wide eyes and moaned when his boots scraped on the wall of the small yard at the back.

When he returned she was with Niall in her husband's bedroom. It was disordered because Ryan had been cranky that evening and would let no one disturb him. His tea was cold and untouched beside his bed, and the buttered bread

fouled with cigarette ash. Only his head was visible, a narrowed egg of a head and a face sunken and yellow.

"I'm a dyin' man, Waxer," he whined, "a dyin' man."

"We're all dyin' men," Waxer said, "you're not dying when it comes to finding your way to Tobin's of a Saturday."

He beckoned Niall and strode to the window.

"The stuff," he snapped without turning around. Niall bent over his father.

"Dad," he pleaded, "will you get up. Did you not hear them?"

"Am I ever hearin' anythin' else? They're goin' to the barracks."

"They're not," Niall said urgently. "They're goin' to Freddie's house."

His father shrank into an obstinate ball in the bed. His thin hands gripped the clothes tightly about his neck.

"What curse is over me," he asked, "what possessed yiz to come in? There's no more guns goin' in here. I'm black and blue with the lumps under me mattress."

Niall gripped him by the shoulders and swung him to the floor. While the mattress was rolled back he stood bent and shivering by his bed. His left hand clutched the neck of his nightshirt and when a fit of coughing seized him his right pulled the bottom downwards for decency.

"Waxer," he pleaded, "am I to spend me latter days lyin' on a bloody magazine?"

"Come on, come on," Waxer snorted, "get the stuff out of that."

He leaned forward to peer through the window. There were lorries about the block and the room quivered sometimes with the trundling of them. Suddenly he stiffened.

"Dummy," he breathed, "get the manhole open."

Niall's mother crossed herself. The Dummy went out quickly to the back. The boots of soldiers grew loud on the pavement outside, while another lorry thundered in from the strand road. They were surrounding the house. Waxer motioned and Niall's mother followed them to the backyard.

"You'll have to put back the cover," Waxer said to her. "Lift it slowly and don't fuss. Then put your stool and the bath tub over it. Splash the water about as though you'd been washing."

Niall and she exchanged looks. She bit her lip.

"I will, Mr. Brannigan," she said, "I will."

Waxer let Niall and the Dummy down first. Then he followed nimbly. The sun lay warmly on the little yard and

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the bin in the corner cast a long shadow. Niall's shoulder brushed against the green ooze of the wall and the Dummy's nose wrinkled in disgust. Then the trap above was eased into position and the square of light narrowed and went out. They began to shuffle forward warily in the smelling darkness.

When the lorry pulled up outside Freddie's house the street was deserted except for a child with a white milk jug who stood to watch. The old men who used sit on the low window sills were gone, and their dogs and their gossip. From an arc of wetness around a half scrubbed doorstep steam still rose lightly, and here and there a furtive curtain moved. The child went demurely up the street. She found Freddie with Phil Tobin in the back bar.

"Well?" he said.

"The soldiers are at the house," she panted. "I ran."

"Did they see you?"

"No," she said, "they didn't mind me. I was fetchin' milk."

Phil Tobin was twisting his white apron with his hands. He had fat stubby fingers. The apron was like a handkerchief against the width of his stomach. Freddie put his hand on her head.

"Good child," he said gently, "get the milk and bring it back and say nothing."

He became anxious.

"Remember," he insisted quietly, "nothing."

She nodded and slipped out.

Phil tugged at his sleeve.

"For God's sake make a move," he said, "they'll be in on top of us."

"That's right," Freddie answered, "they waste no time."

They picked their way through a tortuous passage and down stone steps.

When they were in the cellar Phil said: "I knew it. Someone informed."

"What makes you think that?"

"I'm no man's fool," said Phil Tobin.

"Unless we were seen, only yourself and the Ryans could know."

"People can talk," said Phil.

Freddie glanced round at the barrels which littered the cellar, and at the grating which opened into the lane above. There was a mattress in the corner and a roll of blankets. He stooped and took out a revolver. Phil crumpled his apron in his hands. The apple-red of his lusty face was wrinkled and perturbed.



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"I don't know in the name of God what prompted youse to come in," he declared.

"Orders," Freddie said, straightening. "Don't ask me why." He settled himself facing the door.

"You'd best get back to the shop," he said. "If they find me, tell them I came in through the grating."

Phil closed the door and went off with a nervous jangling of keys, and Freddie sat down to wait.

The soldiers searched his house. They swore at his mother because she would not answer them. They took his father, struggling, with them. Other houses were ransacked also. But when the night came and they were spread watchfully throughout the town nothing had been found.

When they reached the mouth of the tunnel the sun was down and the smell of the sea stronger because it was night. From the fern grown opening of the disused drain they could see the whole wide expanse of the strand; the lighthouse which stood beside the barracks at the extreme end of the breakwater, two miles of inkiness between, then the stringing of lamps along the coast road on their right, smears of blurred light through the misting rain. On the right too, lay the Terrace and the house they had come from, Niall's house. The light was in his father's bedroom. He could single it out from all the lights along the strand road. When he was a child and night had overtaken his playing he had often walked to it in a straight line across the ebbd strand.

Niall stared for a long time at the light while they crouched in misery and felt the air damp about them.

"Somebody told," he said with sudden bitterness, "some rat."

"I know," Waxer said smoothly, "but who?"

"I don't know," Niall said, "someone."

He stared back into the darkness.

"They went to Freddie's house; I counted the turns."

"For all his smart talk," Waxer said, "Freddie is only a child; he wanted to be with his mother."

"He's got his bellyful now," Niall said. "You might as well talk to the wall." Waxer's mouth was closed tightly and his eyes looked to the right at nothing. He was thinking of several things at once.

But Niall's eyes moved restlessly, surveying the dripping walls, scanning the darkness.

"If they came to search here we're cornered. We can't get out."

Waxer smiled coldly. "We can get out the way we got in."

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You can always do that."

"No damn fear," Niall said, "not back through the house. I'm damned if we go that way."

"Who's giving orders?"

"To hell with orders," Niall said with heat, "that's one order you won't give." Waxer's mouth thinned.

"Who said so?" he asked evenly.

"I did. The mother is there and the da is a sick man, he's dyin'; if there was any trouble it would kill him."

Waxer smiled coldly. He sucked in his cheeks until the skin across the massive cheekbones was white. He let the matter rest.

"Until we know what's outside," he said, "we'll stay put."

The tunnel was dismally cold about them and the rain spun thinly across the dark sands. Sound travelled easily across the open space, but to-night the familiar noises were hushed. The darkness of narrow streets echoed now and then as a lorry moved off or changed its position, and that was all. Niall crouched and looked back along the tunnel which ran right under his home. He wondered if the soldiers had stayed in his house, and what his father and mother were doing. He had a long sallow face which at the moment was strained and apprehensive, and eyes that were at all times wide and lustrous. Opposite to him crouched the stocky figure of Waxer. It was Waxer who had brought both Niall and the Dummy into the movement. At the language revival classes Niall had more aptitude than Waxer, but when it came to military action Waxer was officer. It was Waxer who had thought of exploring the almost forgotten tunnel and had arranged with H.Q. for using it as a dump. He was checking the barrel of the revolver which was his sole certificate for scholarship.

Niall watched the houselights on the shore go out one by one. He started at any unusual sound.

"All the same," he said later, "we shouldn't have come in. We were safe in the hills."

Waxer did not answer.

"Safer than here. It was bloody foolish to order four men . . ."

"Cut that out," Waxer said coldly, "cut it out."

"I don't see . . ."

"Drop it," Waxer snarled.

The Dummy looked up mildly. He had taken possession of the bomb and was playing idly with it. Though he was young enough to wear knickerbockers, the legs beneath his black

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stockings were muscular. His lips were turned up and slightly parted, as though smiling at his thoughts.

"When you've knocked off four officers," Waxer said grimly, "you're safe nowhere." He spat into the darkness. He looked at the Dummy and then lay back against the tunnel-wall once more.

"Yer a good soldier," he said drily, "you don't answer back."

The Dummy grinned and continued to play idly with the bomb. A long time later, when they were chilled and cramped and everyone had forgotten the context, Waxer said:

" . . . Nowhere."

When Ryan walked up the plots the following morning there were fewer men than usual. They looked at him sympathetically and let him pass when he showed little inclination to linger. Nothing more had happened during the night. He had been wakened early by his wife. It was a clear morning of sunshine and light white clouds. The sun was on the front of the house and had filled the bedroom as he raised himself on his elbow to lean over the breakfast tray.

"Nuthin' happened?" he had asked, screwing up his eyes.

She glanced covertly at the soldier who sat in the window.

"What could happen," she had said indifferently, "and them miles away."

"That's right," he said, "of course."

He grunted uneasily.

"It's bright out, d'yeh think?"

"Like a summer's morning—thank God.— You could take your walk."

"I will," he decided, "I'll take a turn down to the Bakery." It was his habit when Saturday was fine. He would walk down to the Bakery for his pension and then up the strand road for a pipe and a chat.

"He showed improvement," the men sometimes said to him. It pleased him and made him feel better. "It's the dry weather," he would say, "the doctor says I should go to a sanatorium. It'd cure me, he says."

But that morning he went by without a word. He shuffled moodily past them and stopped some distance away at the strand wall. They saw him huddle with his hands deep in his pockets, staring and staring at the bright pools which flashed in the wake of the tide. One of the men said:

"The soldiers were in the house all night. Isn't it a queer thing they should let him out?" and another:



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"He's waitin' for the band to play. They can't be hidin' forever."

Phil was with Freddie on and off during the day. There was little doing in the shop. The soldiers were still in the streets and people did not go out without necessity. When he was taking away the remains of Freddie's dinner he said:

"I sent that note you gave me. The youngster took it."

"Good," Freddie said, "if an answer comes, bring it immediately. Was there anything else?"

"Ryan was out and about."

"He goes down for the pension," Freddie said.

Phil said meaningly: "The soldiers are in his house."

"What about it?" Freddie asked irritably.

"Nothing," Phil answered mildly, "except that it's funny they should let him out."

Freddie ran his hands quickly through his hair.

He said, "No man would split on his own son." There were dark circles under his eyes and his face was pinched. His eyes were quick and nervous.

"Men do queer things, especially sick men."

Freddie shook his head. He looked around at the dust encrusted walls, at the barrels tilted about the floor and the cobwebs which stretched like threadbare rags across every corner of the low ceiling. He began to pace restlessly.

"I wish to God I could get away from here," he said at last. Then: "Will Ryan be here to-night?"

"Always on a Saturday."

"Watch him," Freddie said, "and if an answer comes, let me know." The keys jangled and the beat of feet on the stone stairway dwindled once more into silence. There was still light in the cellar, and on the grating above loud feet clanged on occasion and passed. But there were long silences, during which he crouched in a corner from which he could command the door, smoking cigarettes, watching a spider spreading its dexterous web between two barrels. It stopped occasionally as though to stare at him. Now and then he blew smoke from his cigarette in a gentle stream towards the web. This would send it scurrying out of sight. His eyes narrowed as he considered the spider. Once he laughed suddenly. Then his mood changed. He broke the web in sudden disgust. It retired altogether for a time, but later came back and began to spin once more. It was inexorable. The streets grew hushed as the light failed and the cellar echoed not at all. The dust, smelling more strongly, foretold rain.

It began that night when the men in Tobins were beginning

to glance at the yellow-faced clock. At first, but for the diminutive drops which flecked the windows, it was hardly noticeable. But later it grew fierce. They sat and heard the wind rise and the rain sweeping over streets and little houses, over limp ropes and hanging nets and the dreary stretches of sand. There was little conversation. A stranger stood for a time at the bar, had some words with Phil, and when the rain was beginning, left. Ryan was there also. He sat nearer the right hand end of the counter and lingered over his drinks. His overcoat was too big for him and pieces of fluff clung to it because of his habit of throwing it on the foot of the bed. He spoke to no one except Phil. He stared miserably into space and tapped absently at his chin with a bony finger.

Whenever Phil stood before him he took out a purse and fumbled awkwardly as he paid.

"It's a poor night," he said and looked down at his drink.

"It is," Phil answered, "for a man on his keeping."

When the men were leaving Phil went down and stood before him with his hands resting on the counter. He looked down steadily at him.

"The sergeant is in the snug," Phil said levelly. "They were round at the house looking for you."

"Lookin'?" Ryan repeated.

"They want to question you."

"Question Phil. They'd have your soul dammed into hell with their questions. They'd have you tormented." He looked right and left quickly. He reached out with bony fingers to caress Phil's arm.

"Phil," he asked, "have you word of Niall, do you know where they are?"

"Where?"

"I'm askin' you Phil, you that knew them." He leaned forward. "Are they in the tunnel—I know there's a tunnel. Are they there?"

"You seem to know more than I do," Phil said.

Ryan looked down at his drink. His face was old and yellow-lined like a rotten apple. His eyes, like Niall's, swam with odd lustre, but they were sunken and peeped from a distance.

"I don't. Phil," he breathed, "I know nuthin'. I didn't even know they were coming back. But if they're in the tunnel it's not safe. I have word, I—I heard them talking, last night in the bedroom . . ."

"You're keepin' the sergeant," said Phil coldly.

"Maybe I am Phil, but I swear before God Niall is a good boy and I played fair by him. He'd tell you that. I reared

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him and I put the clothes on his back. I worked when I should have been at home in me bed. The doctor said a sanatorium would cure me, but it meant money and I couldn't see him hungry. There was nuthin' he had that didn't come from me." Phil's eyes mocked him.

"I wouldn't harm a hair on his head," he said almost to himself, "nor let others do it." A hand was laid on his shoulder. He turned around.

"There's a couple of questions I'd like to ask," said the sergeant, "so finish your business . . ."

Phil came in with the note and held the candle so that Freddie could read. The flame quivered and the grease dripped over and stung his fingers. The shadows retreated from the flame. They huddled in a ring about the two of them. Outside the rain ran in rivulets down channels, and the soldiers scattered at their stations throughout the town crouched miserably and swore. They looked up at the skies and wished for something to happen. Freddie stuck the note into the flame. They watched in silence while it burned.

"I've got to go," Freddie said, "I've to find the rest."

"You'll find no one to-night, are you mad?"

"I'll find them all right. Put out the candle and help me to raise the grating."

"I won't," Phil said backing away, "why can't you bide your time?"

"Quickly," Freddie said, "there isn't any time."

He listened acutely. There was no sound but the monotonous beat of the rain. He snuffed the candle and caught Phil by the arm. They began to build a pyramid of crates directly under the grating. When they had finished Phil's face ran with sweat. They eased up the gate cautiously. There was no creaking on account of the rain. Freddie let himself through. He crouched for a moment to listen. Phil stood by while the gate was lowered. Freddie signed to him, straightened quickly, and strode away.

He went casually through the darkened town, his shoulders hunched and his head down against the rain. Nobody passed: the streets were deserted; lorries stood here and there by the side of the road, vacant and dead beneath the swollen skies, like derelict ships.

But when he reached the strand there were soldiers at intervals along the wall. One was so near that he could hear the crunch of his boots and the irritable clank of equipment. He stopped dead. He was intensely aware of the web that had



been built around him, a web which for months had been growing about him, a web he must break from or perish in. The spider was spinning. His eyes narrowed as each sense became suddenly sharpened. After a while he dropped to his knees and made with painful slowness towards the wall.

They crouched in the darkness, each withdrawn into himself, so that they were three beings, three isolated points of life in a vast solitude. The great ferns which cluttered the mouth of the tunnel were swaying and dripping, but when the wind dropped they could hear sounds on the beach, lost sounds that were lonely like eternity. Niall shuddered and when a fit of coughing seized him he would bury his mouth in his cap in order to stifle it. When shots rang out he licked his lips and glanced through the darkness at Waxer and the Dummy.

His face was grey. The smell of the tunnel and the strain of waiting had made him sick. His limbs were cramped and stiff with waiting. He was fascinated when either of the others moved or betrayed signs of life.

"Who the hell are they firing at?" he asked, his voice rising.

"Maybe they're jittery," said Waxer, "shootin' their shadows."

"We should have shifted last night Waxer, we could have made it."

"We waited for word."

"How could they send it?"

"If I know anythin' about it," said Waxer, "they'll find a way. They won't let the dump go."

"If Freddie was caught . . ."

"Hush," Waxer said, "we've got to listen."

Niall hunched miserably. He squirmed and became uneasy, chafing at his helplessness. He drew his knees up to his chin; then stretched them full length; he turned on one side. Then he shifted again, rubbed a cramped leg, crouched once more over his knees. Sometimes he sighed. But Waxer and the Dummy sat unmoved.

They were silent until the Dummy half rose and grunted.

"What?" Waxer snapped, and Niall jerked forward with his hand going automatically to his pocket. The Dummy jabbed his thumb towards the strand. They listened. Somebody slid down the embankment some distance away. A tin can clinked and then rolled noisily, and shots rang out.

"Christ," Niall said, panicking. He scrambled forward on his hands and knees towards the tunnel entrance.

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"Back," Waxer growled, "you bloody fool, back towards the house."

The Dummy sat rigid, his mouth and eyes narrow lines. Niall still went forward.

"Them's orders," Waxer hissed, "and put that revolver away."

"Go to hell," Niall said. Waxer swore and pounced. Feet slithered on the embankment below and someone fell forward into the tunnel. Waxer flung sideways and came to grips.

"Who is it?" he snarled, and his fingers slipped swiftly upwards.

"Me," Freddie said simply.

Waxer loosened his grip. He felt his hands sticky.

"You're hit."

"Left shoulder," Freddie said, "they caught me when I'd crossed the wall."

"We'd better shift, is it bad?"

"I can't say," Freddie answered. "I had a message from Cassidy. I burned it and came straight."

"Good work," Waxer said. He looked quickly behind him and then back at Freddie.

"Do you know how things are?"

But Freddie had slumped back against the wall. He was quite young, almost as young as the Dummy. His face beneath the shock of dark curls was pale. It was scratched and streaked with sand where he had fallen when the bullets struck him. His nose still bled slightly. Waxer and the Dummy looked on while Niall wiped away the sand with his handkerchief.

"See to his shoulder," said Waxer, "and bring him round. We don't want him on our hands."

"I don't want to strip his shoulder," Niall answered. "I think it might be dangerous in this atmosphere."

"That's right," grumbled Waxer, "do nuthin' you're told." But he made no move himself. He lay back and watched while Niall bent in silence over Freddie. The Dummy shaded a small torch with his body.

"He's bleeding like hell," Niall whispered in sudden terror. "Why don't you do something?"

"Wake him up," demanded Waxer, "I want to know what I can."

Niall shook Freddie.

"Freddie," he pleaded, "Freddie, don't sleep now. Do you hear me? We've got to get away from here."

Freddie murmured and twisted his head from side to side.

"What's he say?"

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"He's wandering," Niall answered, frightened, "something about spiders . . ."

Waxer grunted.

After a while Freddie sighed with his whole body and crene his eyes. Waxer leaned forward.

"There's first aid kit in the bend by the dump," he to Niall, "you'll get bandages there." He nodded to the Dummy. "Show him," he added.

When they had gone he spoke to Freddie. "Now," he said.

"Cassidy sent word by Phil. I was in the cellar . . . watching the . . . They're coming for the dump to-night."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Intelligence says so. You're to lay a fuse if you can and then get out. They'll have a car outside the Ivy Church. . ."

"The Ivy Church," Waxer said ironically, "that's a bloody good one."

"Someone informed . . ." Freddie added.

"Who?" demanded Waxer.

Freddie moved weakly and looked straight at Waxer. He hesitated.

"Niall's father," he said.

Waxer slid forward to the mouth of the tunnel. Here and there on the strand lights moved. They jerked in nervous bars in the blackness. He thought they were coming nearer, but very slowly. When he got back Niall was leaning once more over Freddie.

"They're coming," he said.

Niall looked quickly over his shoulder. Then he went on with his bandaging.

"Do you know who split?" he asked between clenched teeth. Freddie looked queerly at him.

"No, Niall," he said, "I don't know."

There was a short silence during which the Dummy's eyes turned with half-understanding from Waxer to Freddie. Freddie looked away and Waxer's eyes focussed on the ground between his feet.

"We've got to move quickly," Waxer said after a pause. "Can you make it Freddie?"

Freddie nodded.

"Very well. We'll go back by the house."

Niall bit his lip. He seemed on the point of tears.

"Waxer," he said, "it'll kill me da, it'll be the death of him." Waxer swore.

"Waxer," Niall appealed. "Supposin' they're still in the yard . . ."

"It's dark. If we go out shooting there's a chance. You

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and I will go first. Then while we cover them the Dummy will help Freddie through. Is that clear?"

Niall bowed his head. They nodded. There were noises from the strand as the ring drew nearer. They could feel the ring tightening on them. Waxer gestured with the revolver.

"All right," he said, "move."

He betrayed no emotion.

They followed crouched through the darkness. Once Freddie fell, and the Dummy helped him to his feet. They passed the opening of a tunnel on their right. It was at right angles to the main tunnel but had been blocked up about twenty yards from the opening. It contained the dump. There were bandages scattered here and there from Niall's searching. The Dummy paused but Waxer said: "There isn't time."

When they were crouching under the manhole which opened into Niall's back yard there were loud reports and shots ricocheted through the tunnel.

"Quick," Waxer said.

Niall went to his side and pressed his hands against the manhole. He took the strain with his wrists. Then he rose slowly and bent his arms. Waxer grunted and they pushed violently. The cover lifted with the sudden pressure. It went skidding across the yard. Then the rain was wet on their faces.

Waxer fired into the darkness, covering the scullery door and the opposite wall. Freddie gained the yard but the bin tripped him and he fell. He rose painfully, firing, while Niall and Waxer broke for the back wall. "Freddie," Niall screamed, beckoning, "Freddie." But Freddie did not attempt the wall. He turned instead towards the house. After a while he was alone in the yard. He was dimly aware of lights and a kitchen table, and further away, like a long dark tunnel, the hallway and an open door. Beyond the door were soldiers. They opened fire. He shouted and lunged savagely forward. They closed around the hall door. They shot solidly until he reeled against the bedroom door. It swung inwards and he pitched headlong into the room. He moaned and breathed painfully . . .

The Dummy lay back along the tunnel. They had followed him, forcing him slowly yard by yard back to the dump. He was now quite dead. But though the bomb had rolled away from him, the pin which he had withdrawn was still clutched in his hand. It was intensely dark. In front of him and behind him, at about twenty yards distance, were bars of light and cautiously approaching feet. . . .

When Freddie opened his eyes there was no one besides Ryan in the room. At first Freddie did not see him. He was watching the spider. It fascinated him. It crept across the



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floor, now stopping, now moving forward. It grew giant-like and after diminished; it became three spiders, and then ten, all marching or floating in a serried line. Sometimes they wavered and dissolved, sometimes all were spinning furiously. It became one again. Then slowly he was aware of a voice from the bed, an incoherent mumbling. He saw a head above the bedclothes and a thin hand which clutched rosary beads. He stretched his arm along the floor towards the revolver.

He said

"Why did you do it?"

The hand tightened.

Ryan sat up. He looked in terror at Freddie. He had been crying. He shuddered and said

"I didn't know you were comin' back—I swear—you told me nuthin'—what are you doin' with the gun?"

"It's not for you," Freddie answered, "it's for the spider." Ryan saw no spider. His eyes searched. His jaw fell open.

"Why?"

The spider, Freddie knew, had caused the trouble. The spider had made a web. It must be found. He raised himself painfully on his elbow.

Ryan yelled in alarm.

"Freddie—for the love of God—I didn't know you were coming back. I only knew about the dump. There wasn't badness in that, not just about the dump."

"Why . . ." Freddie breathed.

He hardly knew he asked the question. He had found the spider. It was crawling slowly over the bedclothes towards the beads and the hand. As Ryan sank back against the pillow Freddie raised the revolver. He levelled at the spider, lost sight of it, then levelled again. Ryan moaned and said:

"How could I know you were coming back."

Then he closed his eyes. His voice, tired and almost inaudible, murmured "I wanted the money. I wanted it for a sanatorium."

Freddie fired twice at the spider. It disappeared. He stared and saw the stain of blood growing on the sheets. Then suddenly his elbow gave under him and he pitched forward. His eyes were still open. When the explosion shook the room a moment later he neither moved nor heard.

But Waxer and Niall heard. They lay flat in the rain and the darkness. The little garden shuddered with the noise of lorries and about them they could feel the inexorable closing-in of the search. They looked sideways at one another.

Two blocks away, aeons away, looming over low roofs and intersecting walls, rose the Ivy Church.

## MAURICE KENNEDY

### Clouds of Glory

MY sister was a very quiet child; I suppose she would have been about four at the time; she had a round pale face, long dark ringlets, and big, dark eyes, which looked very steadily at you, but without the curious, inquiring gaze of most children. She never laughed or cried; it satisfied her just to stand and *watch*, but it made the neighbours uneasy—they could never know what she was thinking. “A grand child, God bless her,” they would say to my mother, “a grand child surely. It must be a great comfort to you not to have her shouting around the house like our own brood, God help ‘em.” And then they would bustle away down the lane, with their baskets on their arms, and my mother would smile strangely at us, and go into the house. But when my mother wasn’t around, the neighbours said: “Those Casey children are unnatural, the Lord between us and all harm.” I never had much to say for myself, either, and the two of us wandered around the country lanes on our own, with our hands clasped, and not talking at all—like twins, each of whom knows the other’s mind, although there was a year between us. We lived happily in our own small world.

Somehow, it was always summer in those days, and the days were very long. There was sunlight always, and flowers along the grassy banks of the lanes. Away beyond the hills, a mowing-machine would be working in Stacey’s meadow, and the sleepy sound came clearly through the warm air. If you stood quietly in the shade of the hedge, the young rabbits came out along the headlands and frisked on the grass. Poppies burned in the meadows, and sometimes you found a skylark’s nest hidden away in the grass, and could spend an hour looking at the tiny eggs in the little twist of dry yellow hay, lined with hair and fluff, while the mother bird trailed her wings along the ground a little space away. We had no consciousness of evil; it never occurred to us that anyone should wish to steal

the eggs or damage the nest; the bird’s antics interested us, so that we stood and watched, but we never sought to know their reason; we thought, perhaps, that it would be nice if she

came closer, for why should she be afraid of us, who meant no harm?

Saturday afternoons were the best, for then everything seemed hushed by the quivering sun. A cart went down the lane, and you could hear each small, separate sound of its movement—the rumble of iron wheelbands, the scraping side-slip over a stone outcrop, the dull sound when the wheels ran over a muddy place on the road, the jingle of breeching and the squeak of harness, the tingling screech of a dry axle-block, and the monotonous sound of hoofs on the cart-ruts; and sometimes the driver would be whistling to himself as he went down the dusty road to the village. We went through the yard gate, and followed the sound of the cart, trailing our feet in the floury dust and kicking it up in clouds around, our hands damply joined, and a bird singing in the sun above. A car came tearing along the road, almost grazing us where we walked by the hedge, and was gone around a bend with a sudden blare on a horn, but we took no notice. The dust whirled and eddied, settling slowly on the leaves of the wayside bushes. We climbed down into the ditch, where wild strawberries grew under screens of furry leaves; they were scarce and small, but we were easily satisfied, and went on to the village with a few berries turning to a red smear in our small hands.

The street was deserted, except for the carpenter, who had a long balk of timber propped against the front of his shed, and was trimming it for use as a cart-shaft; he looked small in the distance, but we could see the movement of the adze, and the flash of sunlight from the blade as it paused at the top of its swing, then the streak of light as it fell swiftly. A long time afterwards we heard the dull sound as it bit into the timber, and we stood there for a while, listening. Nothing else broke the stillness. The village dogs lay curled in the shadows, fast asleep.

On the corner of the crossroads, the door of the public-house stood open, and a bicycle leaned against the bars on the screened window. A mingled, heavy smell of porter, grain, and tobacco came through the door, for Farrell's was also the village general dealers. We crept in unnoticed. Along the far wall were a row of tall bins, holding flour, bran, pollard, and yellow meal, and the floor was scattered with sawdust over the uneven flagstones. A pair of copper scales hung from a pulley above the counter, and twists of tobacco stood on the back bar among bottles of whiskey; the shelves behind the counter held lemonade and glasses, and a cracked mirror with the face hidden by an advertisement. Auction posters covered the walls, and an advertisement for Duffy's circus made a

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bright splash of colour.

Sometimes Jimmy Farrell would give us the sheet of lead-foil from an empty tea-chest, if he was in a good humour. We stood there in the corner of the doorway, hidden by the shadow, as quiet as mice. Jimmy leant over the counter, reading a newspaper, and talking to a man who was drinking a pint. "Powerful dance a Saturday night," said Jimmy, looking up from the paper, "yeh should have been there. I met the young wan that lives beyant be the quarry."

"A bad wan, that," said the other man.

"Bad, is it, yeh say?" said Jimmy, laughing. "Be the hókey, d'yeh know——"

"Whist," said the man abruptly, "don't yeh see the childher there in the corner?"

Jimmy leaned over, and strained his eyes into the shadow. "I wish to God them childher would make some noise so yeh's know they were in it. Gwan to hell outa that!" he roared suddenly. We could hear his voice complaining as we went out into the blazing sunlight.

The midges were dancing over the little stream by the roadside. We tried to catch a glimpse of the big trout which was reputed to live under the flagstone where a path crossed the stream, but it must have been disturbed by the sound of our footsteps, and we saw only the eddy in the water, and the puff of sand kicked up by the speed of its rush to hiding. A guinea-fowl was screaming metallically in the farmyard beyond the high wall, and a ringing sound of metal came from the forge on the triangle between two roads. Little tufts of dry grass filled the spaces between the cobbles in the yard, and the ring-shaped stone for heating wheelbands was stained with marks of old fires. Bits of rusted iron and old horseshoes lay under a bush in the corner, together with a twisted bicycle wheel, and a broken ploughshare.

It was dark inside the forge; the fire was banked over, and only a tiny red glow came from it. Thin shafts of sunlight came through cracks in the slated roof, like bars of dusty steel. We stood in the doorway for a while, until our eyes became used to the dimness, and we could see where Paddy was working at the anvil, filing the cutters of a mowing-machine blade. He was a small man, with hunched shoulders and bandy legs; his eyes were always red from the smoke, and his hands twisted and covered with scars. He was said to be the strongest man in the five townlands that met at the village cross; the neighbours said that he could pick up the anvil—heavier than an ordinary man—with one hand, and that he had once pulled a beet-lorry out of a ditch, unaided. The knowledge of his own



strength made him quiet, never joining in the arguments when the crowd gathered into the forge on rainy days. He took no notice of us standing in the door, but went on with his work, whistling through his teeth.

We stole in, and edged along the wall to the dark corner behind the bellows, where we sat on an old butter box. After a while, he stood the blade against the wall by the door, and came back with a bar of iron, the end of which he pushed into the fire, then he began to work the bellows, and the forge filled with sound—the deep, sighing intake of air on the upstroke, the squeaking of leather and wooden bearings, the roar of the fire on the downstroke. The glow of the fire increased, and flames began to leap from it, gradually lighting up the end of the forge, showing the smoke curling up along the blackened slope of the back wall, and vanishing through a hole in the roof. In a few minutes, he took out the bar, which now shone whitely, and chopped off a length of it on the anvil. He took up a clumsy-looking pincers and a sledge-hammer, and began to manipulate the red-hot metal with expert speed, turning it and pounding it from a flat strip into a rod of almost square section, by which time it had cooled, and was returned to the fire to be heated again. Then he began to bend it around the conical point of the anvil, until it reached its final shape, and turned up the ends with two swift blows; finally he punched the holes for the nails—three on one side and four on the other. The finished horseshoe was now grey and covered with dull flakes; it looked cold, but when he quenched it in the stone trough, the water boiled furiously for a moment, sending up clouds of steam. He threw the shoe in a corner with a pile of others, and went to stand in the doorway. We found a shiny new nail, and began to trace designs in the dust of the floor.

We heard a loud, trampling sound on the cobbles in the yard. Paddy moved out into the light, and came back leading a huge grey horse, which limped badly on the offside rear hoof. The horse seemed to fill the forge completely, blotting out the light from the door, and we huddled closer into the corner out of sight. A young farmer came in and leaned against the work-bench; he looked worried. "Must have picked up a stone, Paddy," he said, "I'm losing a day with the mowing, and the weather won't hold up long the way it's going." He came over and lit a Woodbine from the fire, and stood there dejectedly. "Yeh could be worse off," said Paddy, "wait now till I have a look at this fellow." The horse stood quietly, with head hanging. Paddy stroked his hand down the horse's leg as far as the hock, then gently coaxed the hoof from the ground; the

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horse shivered and tossed its head. "Aisy there, boy, aisy now," murmured Paddy. "The shoe is twisted at one side: yeh hit a rock, boy. Yer right about the stone, it looks bad enough."

He let the hoof drop, and searched among the heap of shoes until he found the biggest. Then he went to the bench and took a bone-handled knife and an iron spike. "Hold his head, John Joe," he said, "he's likely to kick." John Joe twisted one hand in the horse's mane, and began to stroke its nostrils with the other.

Paddy bent down, and rested the hoof, bottom up, on his leather apron. He straightened the ends of the old nails where they projected through the sides of the hoof, then ripped off the shoe, and began to pare the hoof. The horse jerked its hindquarters away from Paddy, who lost his grip on the hoof, and staggered to one side. John Joe was pushed backwards to the edge of the fireplace before he regained control, and he gave a sudden curse. Paddy spat on his hands, and gripped the hoof tightly between his legs; he began to dig at the stone in the frog of the hoof, which was surrounded by a raw patch.

Suddenly the horse lifted its head, tearing free from John Joe's grasp, and lunged backwards. Paddy stumbled, and the spike appeared to slip and bite into the centre of the hoof. The horse gave a high whinny of pain which echoed in the small space, and slewed around, throwing Paddy violently out the door, then its battering hooves raised a cloud of dust from the concrete floor, and there was a crash of iron as it trod on the heap of shoes in the corner. Through the dust, we could see the pale form pitching and rearing between us and the light, and saw that the horse had turned completely round. It kicked out savagely with its hind legs just as John Joe leaped forward. There was a terrible, soft, tearing sound, and something splashed our faces as we cowered in the corner: then the horse galloped through the door, and crashed over the cobbles, and we heard Paddy's voice shouting after it in the distance: there was no other sound.

In the awful stillness we could see the body lying back over the anvil, the broken body without a face, and then we ran out into the sunlight, my sister's small damp hand clutched in mine. We ran along the dusty road towards home until we could run no more, then stumbled along with our breath tearing our lungs, and our hearts pounding. And now she gave a frightened, lost scream and began to cry, and I was crying too for we had instantly become aware of mortality, and the purposeless evil of the world.

## DENIS DEVLIN

### From "The Heavenly Foreigner"

Since the time in childhood  
When dishes gleamed on the dresser,  
And the tall, blue benignant  
And black, malignant ghosts  
Meant what they said,  
Blue for heaven's haven,  
Black for the fear of hell;

A boy on a blond crate  
Outside the sunlit stables  
Under sheets of silence  
Spoke low to the large-eyed racehorse;  
Before that Eldest Son  
Had heard of the Princess,  
Before the Flood  
Had washed the world's kidneys,  
When eyes grew brighter and brighter  
And tears of generosity  
Were in surprise created  
Out of the musing flesh:

There spoke something else——  
But the sense escaped me——  
And if we were in sin,  
Sad or joyful sin,  
Singing or sighing  
Round the corner of the eye,—  
Round the invisible back:

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Since the time in the back field  
The vast copper beech,  
With the pronged sensibility  
Of his thousand leaves,  
Received and weaved and changed  
Logical shaft of light  
And modulating rain  
And through his roots, rain rising  
Like a diver, back;  
Or from the beach at evening  
The sea like a musing spider:  
Both thousand leaves and sea  
Sang something else,  
Shone something else;

Since men can have said  
On their bed of death——  
“I have made women happy!”  
Or, “that was in my good days,  
I bred a handsome filly!”  
Or, “I lowered the price of bread,  
A new-elected Minister!”  
Or, “with my love I loved  
Those who gave their lives!”

Something there was other  
Always at my elbow,  
I sang, hunted and hated one:  
He sings and hunts and hates me  
Say heaven or hell  
Well or ill  
I cannot make it different,  
Anything, or even other.



## MICHAEL MURPHY



### The Wonderer

**E**VERY four or five minutes Jem jabbed with the tongs a pot of pigs' priddies over the fire, although the first jab had shown they were boilt. He stood on the hearth with a bit of bagging and the tongs in one hand and his cap in the other, waiting to lift off the pot, and wondering what his aunt would say when he told her he had a mind to get married. And then, swiftly, the thought shocked him; then alarmed him as if he had been a child caught out in a deception; and then he became oddly uneasy and belligerent. He had been acting like that all morning.

He was thirty-two and as stocky as a bullock. Even his black hair, cropped close with a buntie fringe sprouting an inch or so above his brows, added a bovine cast to his face. He had square, bony hands, and he wore boots which, from the heart of the sole, cocked to an angle. But his eyes were large and deep and brown, and innocent or mesmerised when they didn't look frightened. They were frightened now, but they softened to innocent mesmerism as he tried to reassure himself by remembering certain happenings.

He remembered that when an exile called and blurted at him in the first awkward silence: "When are they goin' to get you a butt of a woman, boy?" his aunt always said: "We neither put to him or from him then." And she would prod the fire with the poker, or pull at threads of her apron in her lap. He remembered that when a strange girl or two had called on a Sunday evening ceillidhe once or twice (or was it three times?) his aunt would say: "Now don't heed that clock; it's mad. Sure, Jem will leave you a piece of the road." He would see the girl home, and when he got back his aunt would say as she jabbed the fire again: "God knows, an' you mighta seen her a piece of the road an' not leave her at your own gate."

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And Jem would wonder whether she meant what she said or the opposite—just as he was wondering now. He shifted his pipe to the other side of his mouth and once more jabbed the priddicks with the tongs.

Outside a Spring rain was falling in a drizzle, and the race of a hen through the slabbers of the street brought a guttery whisper to the kitchen now and then. Through the window he could see his uncle. Wearing a bag about his shoulders he was powlthering with a cutty spade around a gullion of dunghill water which had dammed up during the downpours of the previous night. He could see his aunt flitting from outhouse to outhouse, her face reminding him somehow of the shattered stone of the new ditch in the Kiln Field. Now she carried a hen by one wing, now an apronful of chickens, putting two broods with one hen and re-setting the clocker he knew. Whenever she flung a gopinful of blood-stained eggshells from her cupped hands, his uncle paused until all had landed on the dunghill under his nose. Then he flattened them with his spade and carefully plastered them with the glar of liquid mud while his aunt watched. Jem knew she was telling him how he should do it.

The belligerent gleam came to Jem's eyes as he watched her, and for the first time in years he wished he was back in his homeplace. But that was a silly wish; for the house was down now and the fields lost to whins. Still, he wished he didn't have to tell his aunt he wanted to get married. And then he wondered why he wished that until gradually he was back with his strange feelings, and wondering again over the reassuring events he had been recalling all morning. He jabbed the pot again.

He never remembered his mother, and he was sixteen when breaking tether threw his father to his death off a load of hay. They were living then at the foot of one of the mountains which walled in the South Armagh valley, at the head of a slabbery leanan which wound past dead walls and closed houses. Jem remembered the last house closing, a few weeks before his father was killed, and he remembered the excitement of knowing that his father would as a result have more cheap conacre. That was the time his grandfather had first come to visit them. He stayed for a week and Jem remembered his father grousing as if to himself: "They'll have a face on them for this."

And he knew that 'they' meant his uncle and aunt; people to whom he showed the fear of an undefined enmity. Not that his father had ever told him anything; but his instinct even

sharpened defensively on the way his father would say. 'they. Never were they spoken of by their Christian names as was common in the parish. They never came on a visit, nor did Jem and his father ever visit them. Jem stood in their house for the first time at his grandfather's wake. He stayed in the kitchen that night while his father took off his cap and went up to the room where the corpse was laid out. When he returned he sat beside Jem, and they both wore their caps like any ordinary neighbour. Everyone shook his uncle's hand and said they were sorry for his trouble, but only a few shook his father's hand and then Jem remembered they did it awkwardly.

It was a cold and hostile place that night. When they took him to live with them after his father's death it was still the same: The beetle leaning out of the pigs' tub at the doorway; the wag-of-the-wall clock which wasn't going; the greasy holes around sunken nails in the table, all seemed with other things to return that old sense of enmity.

Jem shifted his pipe once more, looked at the pot as if seeing it for the first time and suddenly lifted it off. With his legs wide apart he waddled to the tub at the door. The slurry of priddies being dumped made a thick coughing gurgle which always reminded him of his grandfather's cackle. His grandfather had queer stories and queerer questions. "Does this man of ours ever breathe of tally weemen, avick." "Did he ever mention a bye-child." And when Jem gawked in blunt puzzlement his grandfather would cackle: "You're damn near as bad, avick, as the fellah who was told that weemen was devils, an' then ast his Da to buy him a divil. I must get speakin' to this man our ours. . . Damme but I must." That story was the only one which had stayed in Jem's mind, and now it added confusion to his wondering.

He champed the priddies in the tub and went out to the barn, where he got an old overcoat and put it on. Then he took a crowbar, a spade and a shovel and went out to the Killin Field. It was pocked with the cavities of blasting, and great holes had been sunk to bury stones too large to haul off and build into the new ditch. He threw the tools into a hole and jumped in himself, splashing in a few inches of water. Then he lit his pipe, and for the first time all morning felt secure and at ease.

But only for a little while. Fifty yards away the hedge and brambles and the new ditch hazed off into the mist. He worked brutally shovelling out gravel and slabber; but when his feelings and fears seeped back he stopped and mused, only looking up now and then as if expecting to find someone read-

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ing his thoughts. He relit his pipe. When his wondering hazed off frustratedly like the branches into the mist and left him uneasy, he deliberately recalled his grandfather's story and pretended to laugh. But when, in turn, the story brought the usual jolt and the warmth to his face, he tried to wonder why he should feel uneasy. . . .

When he went home for his dinner he said nothing. Back in the field he worked in the pit until the murky light failed. He went home and got his tea, and went out to the ricks and pulled bottles of hay and straw and put them in the byre and stable. He wanted to tell his aunt alone first. When he came in his uncle rose at once from the hearth, with a hurricane lamp and a can, and went outside to milk.

Then Jem lit his pipe and told his aunt he was thinking of getting married; just as if he were saying it about a neighbour.

She was standing at the hanging lamp, and he saw her fingers pause as she turned up the wick. "Uh huh," she said, with an involuntary snort that brought the warmth charging to his face. "An' to who?"

"Breeda," he began; and that was as far as he got.

For his aunt muttered something viciously, flung up her arms and then began to slap her thighs. For a moment he thought she had burned herself on the lamp and he asked what was wrong. She only slapped her thighs more viciously and began to butter: "Jesus God Almighty. . ." This behaviour stunned him and then alarmed him in a new way. He spoke no more. But when his uncle came in she became a bit hysterical, spitting bits of speech and curses and telling him in a roundabout way. His uncle was crossing towards the settlebed, but as the girl's name was mentioned he spun and gaped at Jem as if seeing a sudden deformity in his face. And instead of waiting till the milk was strained to attend to the calves' drinks, he blessed himself and hobbled to the backless chair at the bellows-wheel.

When Jem's aunt calmed down she sat facing the fire, her hands on her lap. Jem spoke quietly to each in turn, but neither answered, nor even glanced up. He stuck out his lower lip along his pipe stem and turned to go. But he stopped; for again his aunt was slapping her legs and making a dummy-like keen, and he heard his uncle's heels tapping the hearth-stone. The sound somehow trapped his thoughts. Listening to it was like watching the splutter of a fuse in a buck of a stone in the field and waiting for the blast to lift rock in splinters out of the earth.

The tapping died away and his aunt was quiet. The crickets



chirped merrily, and a hen in a box in the corner crooned to her chickens. Once more Jem turned to go; and this time his aunt stamped to her feet and, whipping a can from the hob, dipped it into a pot of water over the fire. He watched her come down the floor and dash the water into two buckets. Between them the steam writhed and the lamp burned like the sun through a fog.

"I'd put a squig more water in the big calf's bucket," he said.

"I can feed them," she cut back. "I fed them afore an' I can do it again. . .since it's a shibby we have an' not a man. Well, let me tell you this yeh gahm—" and through the thinning steam he met her furious eyes and jeering words "— If yeh put a ring on her, then that's more nor went on her mother."

"Her father was an Englishman," he thought limply. Where did he hear that. . .

"An Englishman!" his aunt shrieked and laughed biting. Jem stiffened. He hadn't known he had spoken aloud. "Throt an begod then," she went on chokingly, "it was no Englishman her mother tallied with afore she left the country twenty years ago. An' tell her who said so if yeh want." Then she was quivering with fury. "Go out to hell if you're goin', yeh gahm yeh, an' not drive me mad with yer gawky face—As if yeh knew nothin'. Aw, they saw yeh comin'. . .Yeh poor eejit . . .!"

"Wheesht," his uncle kept saying and waving his hand impotently. "Will you wheesht?"

"I'll wheesht none. I don't care who hears me."—

Jem hadn't moved. That look in her eyes terrified him. He watched her stamp about the kitchen. He watched her whip up a kettle and fill it from a crock on the settlebed, and when she stayed there, he knew she was footthering idly. When no one moved he sighed down his nostrils and went up to the fire to light his pipe, and as he bent over the hearth he heard again his uncie's heels tapping faintly. Back at the door he stooped to move the champing beetle out of his way and caught the smell of scalded meal and the sour stench from the pigs' tub. And then his aunt said, as if she was grinding her teeth at the same time:

"Yeh went round long enough, God knows, but yeh got her at last. Fittin's is findin's, I suppose."

Mentally entangled in her words Jem moved to the door as she added:

"Afore yeh go on your gahm's errand, me bucko, yeh better

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know that me an' the likes of that clart will never warm a shin at the one fire!"

"Never," his uncle said, with a bob of his head, and reaching over to light his stubby clay. "Never in her born puff."

"Your grandfather willed you this place, but that's no news to you——." It was, but the glint in her eyes stabbed back the rush of pleasure from this fresh excitement. "Yous got round him I suppose, when yous got your paws on him an' the ravin' of death on him. But don't let that stop you. We can take to the high road with our share. There's always a cother house or the Poorhouse afore——dirt."

She spat the word as if it tainted her month, and his uncle swivelled round on his seat. "Arra, blast an' bugger you, man—Have yeh no gumption in you at all? Sure Heavenly Jay, man——"

But whatever he was going to say was snapped off by the clang of the kettle as it slammed on to the crook.

"Blow!" she cried, flinging out her arm. "Blow, will yeh!"

His uncle turned obediently and slowly began to turn the bellows-wheel, again looking into the fire, while his aunt stood on the hearth facing the rising glow. Sucking a dead, wheezy pipe Jem left them.

Outside it was black dark and he halted for a moment. The dog whined, but there wasn't another sound. He felt now as he had on that first night he had come to live with them, and for a minute he imagined it had only been yesterday. He staggered and groped his way to the gate and let it slam behind him as he went to the road.

There wasn't a light to be seen. But in the south, where a row of hills walled off the valley from the town lights beyond, clouds like huge sponges lurched through the smudge of glare thrown against the hilltop from the town. It reminded him of his aunt standing on the hearthstone with the firelight spearing past her. He walked on. Soon the hedges and gate piers began to take on a dim shape, and from a rise of ground he saw a few distant, scattered lights. He tried to whistle. Suddenly he stopped. The glare above the hills had reflected a dull hint of light in a field to his right. He moved back up the road, stooping and bending and peering.

He was right. . . The Wee Meadow was under water again. It must need a new shore, but he always forgot it until rain flooded that hallow. And here he was with the Kiln Field to be redd up for ploughing and the Spring on top of him. He swore as he walked on again, stooped, like a man trying to aright himself from a perpetual stumble.

But every now and then he stopped as part of his aunt's words shot across his mind; and he straightened as he remembered his grandfather's queer stories and probings, searching for a link between them and his aunt's speech. More confused than ever he went on.

When he came to a small house with light in a nine-paned window he stopped and listened. Not a sound, except the gentle clanging of a pot-lid somewhere as a tramp dog licked it. He made several attempts to whistle, and then he remembered what his aunt had said about his grandfather, having left him the place.

He whistled, tonelessly, timidly. The clanging of the pot-lid stopped, and when the door opened, he heard a dog scurry among the darkness. He whistled again. The door shut and he stepped back from the gate.

The door opened almost at once, and he thought he heard a low giggling. Then he heard her coming, heard the clatter of the furley-hoop as she slammed it on the gate behind her.

"I can't see a stime. Jim? Where are you?"

"Wheesht, Breeda. I'm here," he whispered, and gave a dry uncertain chuckle. Strange that when she said words like 'stime' in her English accent he felt a pulse of contempt.

She groped her way towards him and he pawed her shoulders uncouthly. Suddenly he wished he hadn't come at all.

She began to hum a jazz tune. Then she said suddenly: "Jim, this is a night for the house. There's only mother in——"

"Begod no then, Breeda. . ." And his mouth hung open stiffly. He had never been in the house and he was alarmed at once. The warmth of this alarm reminded him, too, of his aunt's anger and his uncle's tapping heels. Then, as if afraid the girl was sensing his suspicion he blurted: "I've only me ould duds on anyway, an' I'm clabbered to the oxters. It was a woeful ould drabbly day, an' I was sinkin' stones. Couldn't we take the weight off our feet somewhere—on the Summer-seat maybe."

"On a night like this?" she exclaimed, and he felt a laugh twitch the end of her words.

"Well—sit on the tail of me coat—Aw, wheesht, Breeda—wheesht," he pleaded earnestly as she burst out laughing.

"You're the limit, Jim. Well, for a little while. Then we'll go into the house, what?"

He thought desperately and got nowhere. "For a wee while. . ." He left it at that, and moved towards the Summer-seat. When they were sitting he wished he had asked her to

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go for a walk instead. Because he couldn't shake off this new alarm. Her invitation to go into the house was now mixed up with his grandfather's questions and his aunt's wild hintings. He thought he saw a hidden purpose behind the girl's words. . . Maybe her mother's words. . .? And he thought he heard his uncle's heels tapping. Cogitatively, his jaw slid from side to side and he became vexed. The girl beside him began to hum the jazz tune again, her body bouncing gently to its rhythm. He knew he should say something, but he was tongue-tied. He heard her chuckle secretly, amusedly. It sent a thin, gnawing fear into his mind. On top of it an ass bawled somewhere from the darkness on the fatigued fields; and it seemed to Jem that the ass knew of his feelings and was bawling them to the country. He edged closer to the girl, squeezed her waist, but a vision of his aunt's eyes flew before his mind and he stiffened.

"You're shiverin', Jem," Breeda said, still amused. "Come on—let's go on in. . .?"

Just at that moment a lost bird screeched, and as the girl jumped and clung to him, his lips brushed against her cheek.

To his face, up through his body, tingling along his nerves the warm feeling spurted again. But this wasn't the warmth that followed the sound of tapping heels. It throbbed as with fire and made his head sing. Then it made him afraid, and as the feeling ebbed an emptiness filled around his heart. But some of the fierceness lingered in his mind: the same fierceness which troubled him that Sunday going to Mass when he had first seen Breeda ahead of him. That was about a month ago, and she had just returned from England to join her mother. She was wearing a costume which clung to the wavy lines of her body, and he liked the way the coat ended high on her hips. The girls his aunt praised were all gowdy and flat-boned; but Breeda's limbs seemed to ripple like water curving over a stone in the river. Her eyes, too, were bright and gamey like April showers. He liked gamey eyes.

Suddenly Breeda jumped to her feet. "I'm half dead from the feet up—"

"We'll go for a walk," he said impetuously as he got up also.

"But aren't you tired?"

He hesitated. "In a way, Breeda. Mulin' at ould stones—"

"Oh, for Pete's sake come on into the house before you start to talk about land, Jem."

He had only been four times with her, but had never heard that tone in her voice. He began to tremble—with fear, relief—he didn't know which. He had swift notions of his uncle



and aunt colloquing over the fire. . . .The hollow under water.

"You're nōt dead struck on land, Breeda," he said from deep in his throat.

"Hate it!"

For some jubilant reason he thought now he could smell the stench from the pigs' tub.

"I wouldn't take it as a gift," she went on. "To be a bluddy yokel——" She stopped so suddenly that he was amazed. Then he felt her breath on his face. "I'm only jokin', Jem.—Pullin' your leg. Jem?" she said in a lower voice. "What about you an' me hookin' it off to England some mornin'——To-morrow mornin' in fact. Why not?" She even caught his shoulders.

Jem was slowly stiffening. Blood thumped through his veins and lights skidded before his eyes. She said something again, still coaxingly, edging against him, but he was speechless. His grandfather, his aunt, his uncle and his own thoughts were shouting wildly in his head.

It was a noise behind the ditch he heard first, as of a boot being dragged through briars; and then he heard Breeda's rising giggle as the gate squealed and clashed shut. He knew she was gone, but he only took a half-step after her—and then he did hurry to the gate, calling her name softly. He was in time to see her head misted against the light of the window. The door opened and someone leaned out, laughing wheezily. He knew it was her mother. Then from out of the darkness a figure—and another—bolted in half doubles to the door and laughed as they tried to crush in together. Jem heard Breeda's open laugh just as the door slammed shut on a burst of hilarity. He knew now that some fellows had been joking him behind the ditch at the Summer-seat; and he knew that Breeda knew; that her mother knew. His grip on the lathe of the gate tightened savagely.

In a little while he turned away towards home.

Up the road a piece he stopped to light his pipe, and heaved back his shoulders repeatedly like a man relieved of a burden but still feeling the impress of the weight. Then he growled . . .then scowled. The scowl faded and he turned and looked back the road longingly.

Spits of rain nipped his face as he walked on, unaware that he had scraped out a full pipe and was refilling it. "Get to know your wife's mother afore yeh take the daughter, avick," his grandfather had said. And "don't marry for money, but marry where the money is." Breeda hadn't a penny to bless herself. But the swingy style of walk she had. . . . He looked back the road again although the rain now drove into his face

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like the spurs of a rising wind. He turned up his coat collar and walked past the hollow under water without having given it a thought. He went home and into the house.

"It's not waitin' to rain now," he said when he got in. They were sitting at the fire, as if they hadn't moved since he left. But neither spoke, or even looked round at him. Suddenly he remembered the hollow. "Thon hollow's swimmin' again. Where did yeh say the main shore run?" he asked his uncle.

Still no one answered; and then he saw the Rosary beads entwined in his aunt's fingers on her lap. He glanced at the clock. Almost two hours yet to their regular bed-time. He said quietly: "I didn't mean to put yous through your prayers."

His aunt flung out her hand. "Your supper's there if yeh want it. There's a bowl ready. Yeh know where the milk is." And then she sat in silence.

Jem got the bowl and poured milk from a jug, waiting for one of them to speak again. From the dresser he went to the fire, moving between them, and scooped porridge from the skillet with a big spoon. Moving away he accidentally glanced down and saw his uncle's stockinged heels tapping the hearth-stone silently. His aunt had a fixed look on her face. Jem took off his cap, sat on the edge of the table near the lamp and began to eat his supper.

No one spoke. The crickets still chirped from the fireplace, and now and then a rainy gust whisked across the roof. The tarred back of the fireplace gleamed cosily; while from under a chair his uncle's boots jooked in gnarled but familiar and homely twists. Jem smiled and stuck out his lip, and his eyes looked very large and deep. Then he said:

"Sure it was all a bit o' pastime. I let her know it was pastime." And he went on eating hurriedly.

He knew before he looked that his uncle had swept round to stare at him, his eyes alight; and he knew that he was staring now expectantly at his aunt. But his aunt hadn't moved. And then as Jem looked she tossed back her head with a snort and laughed—low and scoffing, but choked with a strange bitterness. It broke into a cackle as she whirled to her feet, her body in a twist, her face quivering. Jem sat transfixed. She reminded him of snakes under the heel of St. Patrick's staff and it terrified him to know he had thought of such a thing.

"Yeh told her it was pastime," and her words sawed through her teeth. "Yeh told her it was pastime—yeh ast her to take you an' she cut the feet from under you——"

"I did not——"

"Don't tell me, me bucko. I know the breed. An' the

gahm couldn't see it was all a cram to get this cut at us. It wasn't enough for her mother to try to leave her bye-child on your father till the priest dragged the truth from her, without you crawlin' back to more of her dirt. An' well you must know it!" She ended frustratedly in an insane screech.

Jem had stopped eating. He wanted to yell: "I didn't know. I wasn't told. I didn't know." But his tongue was tided. His aunt was yelling again.

"It wasn't for nothin' your father died the way he did, an' you're not to this time o' day without knowin' why." Her voice dropped suddenly. "An' there won't be a tongue-thrasher from Hell to Connaught won't have it on their lips afore first Mass time on Sunday. I'm away to me bed."

"I'll be wi' yeh," his uncle said, hobbling after her in a crouch.

Jem watched her go; watched his uncle follow; watched the room door close softly after him. Bewildering things were running wild through his head. He put the bowl beside him and slid off the table. There was a five-pound note in a jug on top of the dresser where his aunt had put it after he had sold a calf. It was still there and he put it in his hip pocket. The rain had now dropped to a lisp. Jem opened the room door.

"Who said she was only havin' me on?"

Once more a listening wind spurred up the rain.

"Me grandfather left me this place you say. Well, if yous hunted me father yous won't hunt me. I'll come an' go as I like. I'll marry who I like. Do you hear that. . .?"

There was no reply.

His words sent a peculiar thrill and fire through his mind and body. And then he realised that the echo was only in his mind: that he hadn't spoken a single word. His tongue hung out and, idiotically, he looked at his hand on the door latch. The rain began to swish over the roof again, like Breeda's laugh, his aunt's cackle. . . .

He closed the door and returned to the table and took up the bowl. Now the wind was boohing through the keyhole. The rain stopped again and he heard the dog scratching himself outside, his leg rapping his box like a thrump-player's finger. It made Jem think of Breeda humming her jazz tune . . . the gamey walk of her. . . But her giggle—the figures jooking behind the ditch—her mother's laugh. . . .

"Flute her!—An' her mother along with her!" His words thundered through the kitchen—and then he ducked instinctively. But it was only the crash of the bowl as he broke

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it in pieces on the floor.

He began to tremble; his fingers worked like a spider's legs on a web. Quickly he slid off the table but halted as the rain came pelting once more. He listened as if he had never heard the like before. Then he gaped at the broken bowl. He picked up a piece and turned it over and over in his big hand while he sucked his teeth savagely, and then stared around the kitchen as if amazed to find himself where he was. His eyes lost their belligerent depth and became wide and mesmerised once more. When the bit of broken delph slipped from his fingers he kept looking down at it. He glanced next at the room and, in a little while, took the five-pound note from his pocket and replaced it in the jug.

Opening the room door he said in a murmur: "The bowl slipped outa me hand. . ."

There was no reply.

His mouth slewed sideways as if he were going to yell. He felt now as he had on that day when his father fell off the cart and died at his feet, too shocked to yell, with strange sensations running up and down his spine and gathering in knots at the back of his head. He waited for another moment or so, and then passed his hand over his head; then over again, over the bunty fringe and down his face, while he groaned a deep weariness. Then he closed the room door gently and went up the fire.

He sat down and took out his pipe, fingering the bowl and rattling the stem meditatively between his teeth. And then he began to gape at everything around him: the pieces of broken delph; the wag-of-the-wall; the champing beetle in the tub. . . Gaping as a strange boy might at hostile faces. At that he remembered his grandfather's wake and his father sitting on this stool beside him. For a moment his throat twitched; then he shivered like a man afraid.

Gradually his eyes softened, and he leaned forward with his hands sandwiched between elbows and knees. He was thinking of that hollow under water; thinking next of his grandfather's story; of Breedá's laugh and his aunt's words when the exiles called. . . .

Suddenly he swore and got to his feet; and once more took the five-pound note from the jug and put it in his pocket. When he sat down again he wished fiercely that he were back in his homeplace.



## ROY MCFADDEN



### In Drumcliffe Churchyard

If that old man had risen from the hearse,  
How many there could say they'd read his verse  
With more than the cold glancing of an eye—  
That hard-faced mourner from the Ministry?  
That poet dribbling for the next review?  
They might have felt a genuine poet's shoe  
Applied abruptly to posterity,  
And heard the voice that mauled authority  
In play and speech before storm from the dead  
At drunkards putting sober men to bed . . .  
Not in Drumcliffe, Yeats, are you to-day.  
They've brought your skeleton to Irish clay  
For Irish worms to pick at; but you write  
Your signature elsewhere, beyond the trite  
Observances of country and of creed,  
In time and place where there is genuine need.

## PADRAIC COLUM

### The Poetry of Jonathan Swift

'THE DAY OF JUDGMENT' is, to my mind, Swift's greatest poem. But its opening is defective. It should begin:—

Amazed, confused, its fate unknown,  
The world stood trembling at his throne.  
While each pale sinner hung his head,  
Jove, nodding, shook the heavens, and said . . . . .

But the first lines are:—

With a whirl of thoughts possessed  
I sank from reverie to rest.  
A horrid vision seized my head,  
I saw the graves give up their dead!  
Jove, armed with terrors, bursts the skies,  
And thunder roars and lightning flies.

And then:—

Amazed, confused, its fate unknown. . . . .

The poem is so exciting that we only perceived the defect upon examination: instead of presenting himself as being there, on the scene of judgment, the poet begins by explaining how he got there, and the explanation hobbles us. That defect is not in a lesser poem which is also of judgment, the poem about the servile Irish Parliament:—

As I stroll the city, oft I  
See a building large and lofty,  
Not a bow-shot from the college;  
Half a globe from sense and knowledge:  
By the prudent architect  
Placed against the church direct.

. . . . .  
When I saw the keeper frown,  
Tipping him with half a crown,  
Now, said I, we are alone  
Name your heroes one by one.  
Who is that hell-featured brawler?  
Is it Satan? No, 'tis Waller.  
In what figure can a bard dress  
Jack, the grandson of Sir Hardress?  
Honest keeper, drive him further,  
In his looks are hell and murder;  
See the scowling visage drop,  
Just as when he murdered Throp.

. . . . .  
Bless us! Morgan, art thou there, man?

## PADRAIC COLUM

Bless mine eyes! Art thou the chairman?

Chairman to your damned committee!

Yet I look on thee with pity.

Dreadful sight! What, learned Morgan

Metamorphosed to a Gorgon!

From the beginning the poet is on the scene.

I do not think it is by chance that two such characteristic poems give us the impression of an arrival, of a man who has just come on the scene. There are many poems of Swift's that give us, perhaps not so strongly, that impression. Jonathan Swift is a man who arrives, sees, judges. The "Journal to Stella" begins with an arrival and is mainly about arrivals. Swift's most noted book is about a traveller, one whose arrivals make the main part of the story.

And that is not by chance. His centre is neither Ireland nor England. He was Irish by birth, but English by infantile surroundings; Irish by boyhood and youth, then English by young manhood; Irish again; then English by participation in great affairs; then Irish again by championing an Irish cause—a cause which had to do not merely with Mr. Wood and his ha-pence but with the dignity of an Irish kingdom. In the Drapier's Letters he names himself an Irishman, but ambiguously; the ambiguity is so interesting that the words have to be quoted:—

I was bred in a Free School where I acquired some little knowledge of the Latin tongue. I served my apprenticeship in London, and there set up for myself with good success, till by the death of some friends and the misfortunes of others, I returned into this kingdom and began to employ my thoughts in cultivating the woollen manufacture throughout all its branches.

He is speaking in the character of the Drapier, of course. But note how he avoids designating his birthplace; he speaks of his return to Ireland. And there is ambiguity at the end of the letter:—

But if your Lordship will please give me an easy lease of some part of your estate in Yorkshire, thither I will carry my chest and turning it upside down resume my political reading where I left it off; feed on plain homely fare, and live and die a free honest English farmer. But not without regret for leaving my countrymen under the dread of the brazen talons of Mr. Wood.

He will live and die an English farmer, but his countrymen, by the same token, will be left behind.

The word 'boldness' was used by Goldsmith in what I believe to be one of the rare pieces of genuine criticism of Swift's poetry. It is distinguished, Goldsmith said, not by its greatness but by its boldness. Boldness, that seldom-found

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quality in verse, is present in nearly every verse of Swift's that we read. Often his begins in the spirit of a man attacking someone or something, and the attack usually astounds us not only by its boldness but by its dexterity. Here is a passage from his satire on Lord Cutts:—

But e'er since man invented guns,  
A different way their fancy runs:  
To paint a hero we inquire  
For something that will conquer fire—  
Are these too low? Then find one grander,  
Call my Lord Cutts a Salamander—  
First, then, our author has defined  
This reptile of the serpent kind,  
With gaudy coat and shining train,  
But loathsome spots his body stain;  
Out from some hole obscure he flies,  
When rains descend and tempests rise,  
Till the sun clears the air, and then  
Crawls back neglected to his den.  
So, when the war has raised a storm,  
I've seen a snake in human form,  
All stained with infamy and vice,  
Leap from his dunghill in a trice,  
Burnish, and make a gaudy show,  
Become a general, peer and beau,  
Till peace hath made the sky serene;  
Then shrink into his hole again.

.....  
Then I'll appeal to each bystander  
If this be not a Salamander!

Swift has squeezed out the last particle of insult. And note his dexterity in bringing in a spectator to confirm what he has said.

That is what the maker of the street-song does—brings in the crowd as witnesses to what he has put in his song. Swift was thoroughly grounded in the mechanics of the street-song. In his unformed years he had gone through the collections in Trinity College that bore such titles as "The Newest and Most Ingenious Poems, Songs, Catches, etc., against Popery, 1689," "The Muse's Farewell to Popery and Slavery, 1690," "Poems on Affairs of State, 1703," "A Collection of Poems relating to State Affairs, 1705." These must all have been written to influence crowds, to down adversaries, and were, no doubt, in a style popular enough to set apprentice-boys singing them. That Swift knew all the methods of the street-song maker is shown in the ballads he wrote to be sung on the streets during his campaign against Wood's ha-pence—"Ye people of



Ireland, both country and city," and "O Dublin's fine town," and others. And then on another occasion and on a level more characteristic of Swift himself, there is "The True English Bishop to be Hanged for a Rape."

There can be no doubt but that his familiarity with street songs had part in forming his characteristic poetry. But the power of projecting himself would have been his in any case. He was born with a dramatic flair. His "Polite Conversations" show that he could have been a dramatist if the intrigue that was the feature of the eighteenth century comedy had not been too dull for him. But perhaps it would be truer to say he had a genius for stage-management; that genius is shown in the way he built up the issue of Wood's ha-pence to a towering climax—the hidden man who yet manages to attract loyalty, the accompaniment of street songs, the muffling of the bells of Saint Patrick's, on the condemnation of the Drapier's Letters, the inevitable advance to the higher statement—the independence of the Kingdom of Ireland. And in his private poems he does what writers are seldom able to do—dramatize himself as a character—"Swift", "The Doctor", and, most sympathetic of all, "The Dean." He sees himself as seen through other peoples' eyes, and his most charming pieces are the ones in which he sees himself through women's eyes as the rather exacting companion. For weeks a line from one of such pieces has stayed in my mind as something very entertaining:—

Small beer, a herring, and the Dean.

Stella had been staying at a country house, Wood Park, where she had had partridge, pigeon, quail, the best of wine, delightful company. Now she is back in her house on Ormond Quay:—

From Ford who thinks of nothing mean,  
To the poor doings of the Dean;  
From growing richer with good cheer  
To running out by starving here.

How'er to keep her spirits up  
She sent for company to sup:  
When all the while you might remark,  
She strove in vain to ape Wood Park.  
Two bottles called for (half her store,  
The cupboard did contain but four:).  
A supper worthy of herself,  
Five nothings in five plates of delf.  
Then for a week the farce went on;  
When, all her country savings gone,  
She fell into her former scene,  
Small beer, a herring, and the Dean.

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Again dramatizing himself as the habitual companion whose interest in a person makes him a bit of a taskmaster, he has his hostess in a house in the County Armagh complain about his ways as a guest:—

Before he came here  
To sponge for good cheer,  
I sat with delight  
From morning till night,  
With two bony thumbs  
Could rub my old gums,  
Or scratching my nose,  
And jogging my toes;  
But at present, forsooth,  
I must not rub a tooth,  
When my elbows he sees  
Held up to my knees,  
My arms, like two props,  
Supporting my chops,  
And just as I handle 'em  
Moving all like a pendulum;  
He trips up my props,  
And down my chin drops,  
From my head to my heels  
Like a clock without wheels.

.....  
Now changing the scene,  
But still to the Dean;  
He loves to be bitter at  
A lady illiterate;  
If he sees her but once,  
He'll swear she's a dunce;  
Can tell by her looks  
A hater of books;  
Through each line of her face  
Her folly can trace;  
Which spoils every feature  
Bestowed her by nature;  
But sense gives a grace  
To the homeliest face:  
Wise books and reflection  
Will mend the complexion:  
(A civil divine!  
I suppose, meaning mine!)  
No lady who wants them  
Can ever be handsome.

.....  
And then he grows mild:

Come be a good child;  
 If you are inclined  
 To polish your mind,  
 Be adored by the men  
 Till three score and ten  
 And kill with the spleen  
 The jades of sixteen;  
 I'll show you the way:  
 Read six hours a day.

His great projection of himself is "On the Death of Dean Swift." Here he is as the one who, although denied his proper dues, made himself the champion of a country and the champion of his friends. This, too, is a poem about judgment, judgment on himself as a public character. He judges his own writings, knows that they have had what he wanted them to have, influence, that they are not neglected, that they have high distinction:—

His vein, ironically grave,  
 Exposed the fool and lashed the knave.  
 To steal a hint was never known,  
 But what he writ was all his own.

He knows that he has done something which few people in the world have the morale, the power, the skill to do:—

The Dean did, by his pen, defeat  
 An infamous destructive cheat;  
 Taught fools their interest how to know,  
 And gave them arms to ward the blow.  
 Envy has owned it was his doing,  
 To save the hapless land from ruin;  
 While they who at the steerage stood,  
 And reaped the profit, sought his blood.  
 To save them from their evil fate,  
 In him was held a crime of state.  
 A wicked monster on the bench,  
 Whose fury blood could never quench;  
 As vile and profligate a villain,  
 As modern Scroggs or old Tresilian:  
 Who long all justice had discarded,  
 Nor feared his God, nor man regarded;  
 Yowed on the Dean his rage to vent,  
 And make him of his zeal repent:  
 But heaven his innocence defends,  
 The grateful people stand his friends;  
 Not strains of law, nor judge's frown,  
 Not topics brought to please the crown,  
 Nor witness hired, nor jury picked,  
 Prevailed to bring him in convict.

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The fact that they are occasional, even casual, gives Swift's poems when read in bulk—the collection I have been through amounts to five hundred pieces—a singular impact: the voice, the gesture of a person comes over to us. For Swift, writing out of the moving circumstance, the striking event, gives us the immediacy of the circumstance, the event. There are exceptions to this, of course; there are contrivances and deliberations, but not in very many cases. On us to-day the vigour, positiveness, clearness of Swift's verse should be influential.

He spoke in his letter to the Chevalier Wogan of his verses as being trifles. Still, we may be sure that the man who looked on himself as born to introduce irony would not want these innovating poems to be set aside as trifles. Few were printed in his time, and he never saw a published collection. Stella collected and transcribed poems he had written up to that time (but the prudent Dean must have kept some from her attention), and he approved of her labour:—

So, if this pile of scattered rhymes

Should be approved in after times;

If it both pleases and endures,

The merit and the praise are yours.

He has been blamed for 'coarseness' and 'savagery' in his verse. But the verses that have drawn this blame are not really 'coarse' or 'savage', for coarseness and savagery imply some release of forces in the blood, and the pieces in question are essentially cold-blooded. They are different in kind from "The True English Bishop to be hanged for a Rape" which is really savage. "Phyllis, or the Progress of Love" is about the career of a prude who makes a hurried marriage and contracts a disease; "The Progress of Marriage" is about a divine of fifty two who marries "A handsome, proud, imperious girl" and who leaves her a widow with an estate which permits her to marry a diseased ensign. "Strephon and Chloe" is about the embarrassments consequent on natural functions in intimate relationships. Insensibility is at the centre of these pieces. Swift himself must have had a 'Salamander' side, and these were written out of it. Perhaps "Cadenus and Vanessa," so cold and deliberate, was written out of it, too.

And what is one to say about "On a Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed?" Just that it is heartless. Swife, later on, will tell us:—

For he abhorred that senseless tribe

Who call it humour when they gibe:

He spared the hump or crooked nose

Whose owners set not up for beaux.

But there he is pursuing with disgraces a starving, sick street-



walker and heaping on her the last ignominy.

It is a relief to turn from these 'Salamander' pieces to Swift in quite another vein—"To a Lady Who Desired me to write her a Poem in the Heroic Style." In the verses he offers Swift has such command of his matter and form that he can keep his mood mellow and make his satire gay. It is in the form of a conversation with an agreeable lady and so the egotistical approach is avoided. It is witty as no other poem is witty and it manages to pillory all whom Swift hated. Insults become epigrams. The whole movement of the poem suggests a dancer or a skater who has mastered a style:—

When my Muse officious ventures  
On the nation's representers;  
Teaching by what golden rules  
Into knaves they turn their fools;  
How the helm is ruled by Walpole,  
At whose oars, like slaves, they all pull.  
Let the vessel split on shelves;  
With the freight enrich themselves;  
Safe within my little wherry,  
All their madness makes me merry;  
Like the watermen of Thames,  
I row by and call them names;  
Like the ever-laughing sage,  
In a jest I spend my rage:  
(Though it must be understood  
I would hang them if I could:)  
If I can but fill my niche  
I attempt no higher pitch.

He has conveyed in a parenthesis that any man of good breeding, for the sake of the dignity of mankind, would rid the world of such riff-raff and then turn to a conversation on:—

How to relish notions high;  
How to live and how to die.

But his greatest projection of himself is carved in black marble and is in Latin: it is his last. A man has been here and has found a way of making us know it. Yeats has made an unforgettable poem apropos of the epitaph:—

Swift has sailed into his rest;  
Savage indignation there  
Cannot lacerate his breast.  
Imitate him if you dare,  
World-besotted traveller; he  
Served human liberty.

It is not what Swift had inscribed, however: his appeal is not to a "world-besotted traveller." It is to a traveller.

HUBERT BUTLER

## The County Libraries and The Censorship

LAST year the old controversy about censorship revived in the "Irish Times." The majority of the writers disapproved but there was a sharp difference as to who was to blame for it. Mr. O'Faolain traced it to the obscurantism and philistinism of the government, an anonymous writer traced it to the Church.

Almost at the same time I read a letter in a local paper, signed, 'Harassed Librarian.' He complained that there was not half enough censorship and that 15% of the books he circulated were what he called 'questionable vintage.' He suggested that it would be a fine task for a band of young idealists to get together and form a voluntary censorship group. I found this a horrifying letter, yet I have some sympathy with 'Harassed Librarian' for I was a county librarian in Ireland myself twenty years ago. I can guess who are harassing him and how little help he is getting in dealing with them. The pressure towards censorship does not principally come, as Mr. O'Faolain and his adversary think, from either church or state. It is entirely democratic and comes from the people. It is closely connected with education and book-distribution and social organisation and till the cause has been accurately diagnosed the cure cannot be found.

I believe that it is largely the spread of free libraries that has made the censorship important. The private purchaser can always elude the censor, his pride may be humbled by what many feel to be an insult to his intelligence and good sense, but his reading matter is not seriously curtailed. It is round the libraries that the conflict rages hottest. Therefore it is worth taking a look at the libraries.

The county library, which I was organising, was in Northern Ireland. I was not by birth or inclination a townsman and

this seemed to me at the time the most congenial and useful work, which I could do in my own country. I did not have the fashionable horror of 'uplift' and though I knew that a great many Irishmen considered Sir Horace Plunkett a Big Bore with his manifold schemes for raising the cultural level of the countryside I revered him. Plunkett and A.E. and their associates were at the centre of this movement to bring self-education within reach of those who were too poor or too far away to reach it in the normal way. The library was to be the intellectual centre of the village as the creamery was to be its economic centre. By means of books the animosities that arose from race and religion and class were to be dissolved.

It was nearly three years before I realised that none of this was going to happen. That, in fact, something almost precisely opposite has happened is revealed by 'Harassed Librarian's' letter. What went wrong? The plan seemed reasonable enough. In each county there were to be 2,000 carefully chosen books, a young man or woman, who liked books; a select committee and a money grant. From all this in two years time (that was the period of incubation allowed by the Carnegie Trust), a new and independent organism would develop, acting like yeast upon our stodgy provincial society. A good idea, but in Ireland it was unfamiliar and no one was ready for it. Except in a favourable environment, books are not automatically active like yeast or even serviceable like tools. They are just books, and books in Ireland are popularly regarded as mere commodities. The librarian found himself looked on as a tradesman retailing groceries and depending on the goodwill of his customers. Horace Plunkett was to recognise this himself, when he finally decided to transfer the magnificent co-operative library from Dublin to Doughty Street; in Ireland he found it was chiefly used by some Japanese students who happened to be studying at Trinity.

In the country the first librarians tried to be something more than the mere distributors of printed matter. Some organised literary competitions through the schools, some arranged lectures. Robert Wilson in Sligo took gramophone records round the country districts and gathered small groups of music lovers. Yet these efforts got very little encouragement from the committees and the Central Organising Council became involved in a squabble, reminiscent of the censorship squabbles of to-day. It had no time to lend encouragement to the 'Harassed Librarian.'

The first County Library Committees were in most cases better than their successors, yet they were a handicap rather

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than an assistance to the librarian. They recognised that books were more like tools than groceries but they still regarded them as dangerous tools. The crisis in Dublin, (the principal organiser of the county schemes had published a story which was regarded as blasphemous), confirmed them in this attitude. Libraries were doubtful blessings. At the end of the two years probation, many County Councils only agreed to continue the library by a minute majority.

The committee members in the northern town, where I was County Librarian, paid occasional visits of inspection. I only remember one of them getting a book out himself. From the beginning they plainly thought it was their mission to supervise reading rather than to read themselves. My impression is that some, to whom the idea of 'free books' was still a novel one, felt that they would lose caste by borrowing them. It was not only the more illiterate committee members who felt like that; I remember an imperious Colonel J. who prowled round our library, snapping the books in and out of the shelves and fluttering through them suspiciously. I knew he was searching for some kind of contamination but was puzzled why he examined the general rather than the fiction. At last his eye caught the long green row of the Irish Texts Society. He snorted angrily and said that he strongly objected as a ratepayer to supporting political propaganda from Dublin. Then there was a Mr. and Mrs. McWhitty, a Presbyterian farmer and his wife, who used to come to the library on fair days, bearing books which they wanted withdrawn immediately from circulation and looking at us reproachfully. My colleague had a special way of dealing with them. He used to keep ready for them three or four books of doubtful propriety, which he asked them to report on. They went away flattered and self-important. In the North at that time the most censorious in regard to morals as well as politics in literature were Presbyterians, but I believe the wish to decide what other people should read is a matter of temperament rather than denomination. How pleasant it was when once in a while,—but how rarely!—somebody came in who saw the possibilities of building up a play-library for the local dramatic company or of assisting local history or natural science, who looked at the library not as a dangerous ammunition dump or a way of escape from his surroundings, but as an instrument for interpreting them and enlivening them.

It was a misfortune too, perhaps, that these first literary librarians looked at books from the standpoint of the creative writer rather than the scholar. The imaginative writer, particularly when he is young, is individualist to the point of



anarchy. Books can be a stimulus to his creative work, but they are not essential to it. Perhaps, as a legacy from their school-days, where the imaginative writer usually comes off **second best**, they retained a slight horror of serried ranks of informative books. One of our chief librarians was in the habit of saying to us: "I loathe a lot of books all in a row" I found this understandable but I wondered why he had mixed himself up with the libraries. His 'scepticism' was shared by some of his colleagues and those of us who believed in the county libraries began to feel we must be rather naive priggish people.

At least, however, the organisers had their eyes open for talent and were not interested in those fantastic things 'Library Certificates.' (The technical business of running a county library is simple and any educated person can quickly master it.) As a result, several gifted Irishmen, who would otherwise have looked for work abroad, found it for a few years at home. They were mostly 'writers' rather than scholars. Scholars, those who read books for knowledge rather than inspiration, would have made better librarians perhaps. Yet scholars are usually urged on inexorably by examinations to a career. It is not easy for them to take on work, merely because it is interesting, full of promise and appears to need doing. A 'writer' is not so securely lashed to the conventions. Five or six of those early librarians were of outstanding ability, but their enthusiasm was soon quenched by the indifference of the committee and the preoccupation of the Central Body. Irish writers have often acquired a warped rather cynical disposition and I think some came to take a malicious pleasure in dispatching to the countryside the bales of bunkum which were asked for.

Only a strong lead from Dublin could have mended matters but it never came. As a result of the squabble about the story, the Central Committee in Dublin was abolished and the headquarters of the Irish County Libraries transferred to Dunfermline. This was a characteristically cowardly retreat. From then on each librarian had to battle on his own with his committee and no help or encouragement came from outside. Worse than that, when the Dublin central body went, the last cultural bridge between the Twenty-Six Counties and the Six was broken down. There had never been much traffic on that bridge, but at least it existed. At the worst those twelve volumes of the Irish Texts had passed across it to the Northern libraries. The first collection of 2,000 books, with which each library North and South was equipped, had been admirably selected. The hope that a central co-ordinating administration

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might watch over further growth had now to be abandoned. Each library grew haphazard on its own.

The fact that the cause of the dispute had been a story by a well-known writer seemed to throw the whole writing fraternity under a cloud. But possibly there has always been a deep distrust of the writer in the library profession. Books, like the children of fallen women, should in the opinion of many be removed from the control of their author as soon as possible. The ideal librarian is a sterile and conscientious professional. Only very rarely does a writer find his way nowadays even on to a Library committee.

The first committees were chosen with great striving for impartiality. There were Protestant clergy, Catholic clergy, Presbyterian clergy and representatives of various regions and professions. In fact they represented every conceivable sectional interest, except an interest in books for their own sake. The idea prevailed that books were very dangerous indeed and might be used for political or religious proselytism and the committee members at first attended regularly in order to watch and check-mate each other. The sectarian and political section in our Northern library was scrutinised suspiciously by the committee members but scarcely anyone took books from it. It would be nice to be able to say that there was a run on the Irish Texts, which Colonel J. considered political literature, but he was almost the last visitor to handle them with interest, and I expect that to-day after twenty years the volumes of the Ulster Saga are as bright and clean in that Ulster town as when I left them. The committee members successfully stymied each other. In their heart they probably believed that no thinking was better than wrong thinking. When the proposal that the library should be taken over from the Carnegie Trust was brought up before the County Council the leading committee members, who were on it, wired their regrets. It was passed in their absence, but they continued to attend committee meetings till they had assured themselves that the County Libraries were not likely to stimulate thought of any kind. Then they gave up. I do not remember a single interested or helpful suggestion from one of them.

In the South the Anglo-Irish soon lost interest in the libraries. The Civil War had reduced their numbers but I think that their withdrawal from cultural activities in the countryside had other causes too. The first World War had drawn their interests further from Ireland which seemed to most of them small and unimportant as well as unwelcoming. They had come to think that a larger stage was necessary for their talents and only a discerning minority was aware that

the world in which the individual can play an effective part is contracting rather than expanding. Such influence as they still retained in Ireland, they lacked the patience or the courage to exert.

What have the Anglo-Irish to do with censorship and libraries? A good deal. We have reached in Ireland the nadir of Anglo-Saxon civilisation and, whereas the majority has dissociated itself, in theory at least, from that civilisation and cannot logically deplore its decline, the Anglo-Irish cannot be indifferent. What they see is not a displacement of Anglo-Saxon culture,—it was never so strong and irresistible as now,—but a progressive and appalling vulgarisation.

The fate that has overtaken the County Libraries is symbolic, a shelf of untouched Irish Texts and several tons of what 'Harassed Librarian' calls 'doubtful vintage' from England. English literature in Ireland is shameless and furtive like a neglected child. Nobody will take responsibility for it and as a result it keeps bad company. Our County Libraries have facilitated rather than impeded the commercial exploitation of literature. They are doing for the arts of knowledge and literary craftsmanship just what the cinema is doing for the visual arts and the holiday camps are doing for the social arts, though these last are not heavily subsidised by the community. A flood of imported Anglo-Saxon vulgarity is pouring in irresistibly into a vacuum. This vacuum is one of the least creditable achievements of the Irish revival. No doubt some resistance had to be made to the encroachments of English civilisation if a native one was to struggle into being. But the most effective resistance has always come from those, who respected English civilisation sufficiently to criticise it, who could detect the shoddy, because they loved the good. We owe our libraries with their 'questionable vintage' and also indirectly our censorship, not to these discriminating critics of English literature, but to the fanatics to whom all modern English literature from E. M. Forster to E. M. Hull is equally reprehensible.

I have found an old county library catalogue from the library to which 'Harassed Librarian' succeeded. Its date is 1936 and no present librarian or library committee can be blamed for it. It must be typical of many. I cannot decide how the nasty thing happened. Does it reflect the brainlessness of the library committee, the taste of the country districts or the indifference of the librarian? I believe my simile of the vacuum is the right one. The Irish attitude to the libraries has always been negative. Committees and censors, readers and librarians have all set to, purging and sweeping, and have produced a



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mental emptiness, by which more cynical people have profited. Only the bookseller has had a positive attitude, and who can blame him, if he dumps all the ephemeral rubbish on the libraries.

In the library catalogue of 1936 I looked up the statistics of books issued in an average year. 94% were fiction. Therefore one must suppose that it is the fiction readers, who are now harassing the librarians hardest. Yet among the novels I found no book banned or unbanned by Mr. O'Faolain or Mr. O'Connor, whereas there are 19 by Edgar Wallace and 51 by two ladies called Charlotte M. Brame and Effie A. Rowlands. These write about the sins of English peeresses. For example, to quote four consecutive entries from the catalogue, we have: 'Lady Brazil's Ordeal,' 'Lady Damer's Secret,' 'Lady Ethel's Whim,' 'Lady Evelyn's Folly.'

The books are old-fashioned and I expect that these follies and whims are described with some restraint. On the other hand their successors, from the bookseller's dump, were probably more sexy and the readers who had endured untruthfulness and vulgarity without complaint then began to harass the librarian. Who would blame them? But they should have started harassing years ago. And if they had directed their grumbles in the first place against fatuity the need for censorship would never have arisen. Mr. O'Connor and Mr. O'Faolain are deeply serious writers with whose errors of taste or wisdom other writers and critics would in an educated society be perfectly competent to deal. Yet they are being pilloried because of the whims, follies and ordeals of Lady Evelyn's daughter. Only a negligible amount of public money has been spent on the support of serious Irish writers, hardly sufficient to pay for the administrative machinery of the boards which sit in judgment on them. They are right in resenting bitterly that the public authorities should take notice of them only to persecute them, while public money is spent on drivelling English fiction.

There are not many cultural organisations in Ireland to assist voluntary self-education. Of them all the county libraries demand and receive the most lavish government subsidy. The abuse of that subsidy is, therefore of some importance. To make a few comparisons, the Cork County Library a couple of years ago, presented an estimate of £13,757 (as it happened the County Council cut this by half); contrast this with the budget for the National Gallery of £8,010 or that of the Institute of Advanced Studies of £53,810. Who would grudge £13,000 on raising the cultural level of a large Irish county? But in view of the facts we are forced to ask is it



right that public money should be lavished on bogus cultural enterprises while the National Libraries and Galleries are understaffed and starved of funds and it is difficult for a serious scholar, artist or writer to obtain a livelihood in Ireland.

There is no answer to this question and only a drastic reform of the county libraries can prevent it being asked. It should not be impossible to raise our educational level by means of libraries, bookshops, lectures. I do not like exploiting 'The Red Menace' or arguing that we should do from panic what ought to be done from good sense. All the same I cannot resist comparing the splendid, well-equipped book-shops which I have seen rising from the ruins of Communist towns, with our down-at-heel repositories of trash. In their educational policy some Communist governments pay something more than lip-service to the maxim 'Know thy enemy!' so that in the same street as these State bookshops, I saw, in the larger towns, the crowded reading rooms and libraries of the British Council and the cultural institutes of other western democracies. It is strange too that here in Kilkenny where Dean Swift was educated the bicentenary of his death passed almost unnoticed, whereas in Russia there were many meetings and lectures in honour of this Irish clergyman. His works have been brought out in huge editions and translated into many languages of the Soviets. Will not we be punished some day and terribly for our extraordinary apathy?

Yet in most Irish towns there is a good enough cultural tradition on which an intelligent library system could be built. Only because it is associated, often wrongly, with the Protestant ascendancy, this tradition has been interrupted. There must be some way of repairing the breach of continuity. Some months ago I spent a few hours in the old Evans Library in Kilkenny, which might serve as a suitable mausoleum for Anglo-Irish civilisation. It was founded in the 18th century and endowed with a small income by a Protestant squire. Its members were Kilkenny townspeople of all denominations. It was for about fifty years the centre and focus of the most varied activities, historical, scientific and literary societies. From the group which ran it the Kilkenny Archæological Society, Museum and Library took shape. It also performed some of the functions of the R.D.S. to-day, getting lecturers down from Dublin. On one occasion for instance, a celebrated physicist gave a course of ten lectures on the 'Theory of Light.' Its decay was gradual, and though the spirit had long fled the body, the library itself survived till in 1922 the County Libraries were looking for accommodation for their books. The Evans Library was put out in packing cases in an open

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courtyard, and only a damp and plundered remnant returned to the shelves. Three times since, the Nore has risen and flooded the library, now reduced to little more than a thousand books. Some of the books were unique and the Director of the National Library once thought he might rescue a few of which there were no good exemplars in Dublin. He found the big manuscript volumes for which he was looking, piled up as a barricade to keep out the waters from the new fiction library of the county scheme. That was many years ago but the Evans Library is still there with an inch of blue fungus growing out of the cracks in the binding. Nobody is sure whose is the responsibility for these books and I think that sub-consciously it is hoped that if the decision is postponed long enough, the books will be valueless and no decision will be necessary. The County Library has not been able to assimilate them, but last year it managed to digest the still quite considerable yearly grant which Joseph Evans left for their maintenance. Twenty years ago some pleasant volumes of Berkeley, Hume and Sterne were stolen but as the thieves are looking after them well and have told me that they will return them if ever the Library is re-established, who can blame them? The thieves are Anglo-Irish Protestants and their attitude seems to me inevitable. So long as the Protestant and Anglo-Irish heritage is regarded with contempt, those who loot it will feel no shame.

Because of all this, I do not think that my alarm at the county libraries is exaggerated. They have, like Frankenstein's monster, taken on a life of their own, stupid and tyrannical, which would appal their first champions and creators. They are the original begetters of censorship and also of the need for censorship and in that way they strike at the creators of serious literature. Instead of encouraging originality and independent thinking and local initiative in arts and sciences, they are suppressing it, for bad money drives out good. If you can get the second best without any effort there is less incentive to strive for the best.

What is to be done? I think if we went back to first principles and asked for what purpose free libraries were originally started, the right course to be followed would quickly become apparent. Davis, O'Grady, Lister and AE. have in Ireland all answered this question.

It has often been held that the State should provide small pleasures for the old, the blind, the crippled, free of charge, wireless sets and braille books for example. But it has seldom been expected to provide entertainment for the able-bodied; there are many commercial bookshops and libraries which

would gladly do that and were there no county libraries there would probably be more. The government does not in the sphere of entertainment compete with the cinemas, why should it compete with the private fiction libraries and bookshops.

I can hear some 'broad-minded' person saying, "I don't see why poor old Mrs. X shouldn't enjoy her Annie S. Swan? Why should you deny her her little pleasures? Don't be high-brow, priggish, totalitarian?" But this is typical middle-brow escapism. It is poor old Mrs. X., multiplied by a million, who is to-day the totalitarian monster, gorging herself with those 51 novels of erring peeresses, imposing her will on the divided and ineffectual minority who do not think Annie S. Swan touching or P. G. Wodehouse very funny. They are the Irish counterparts of that negligible group in Germany, which did not think *Mein Kampf* the masterpiece of the century. Let Mrs. X pay for her silly books, just as she pays for her silly films! Or let her neighbours look after her just as they did in the days before entertainment was canned. Of if they are too proud for that let them form a benefit society for her. It is not the ratepayer's job.

If books are not to be groceries, librarians, it is clear, should not be grocers. They should understand how books can be used to foster the creative arts in country districts. Two or three Irish librarians are working on those lines but the bulk of their time has to be spent manœuvring bales of print, in which they take no interest and from which they draw no hopes, about the Irish countryside. It is only as a side-show that they can run a Museum or an Art Gallery or a Play Library.

Though the control of a county library should be ultimately regional and democratic, we must draw back a bit before we can leap. Till there are regional committees capable of selecting books intelligently, the choice should be made, as it was for the first 2,000, by a central Dublin committee, which should also appoint the librarians.

The first Irish county librarians were writers and scholars in embryo or achievement. They had many faults and so had their libraries, but those faults were mostly curable, if anybody had been interested in curing them. The librarians were, for the most part, wisely chosen. They belonged rightly to that class by whom and for whom libraries were originally created.

At present we are exporting or starving the vast majority of our young men and women with literary gifts and tastes. Those, who get drawn into the B.B.C. and the British Council, are more than merely lost to Ireland, for inevitably they are used,—we all know many such,—to foster among strangers a

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view of Ireland's place in the Commonwealth, which is that of the emigré rather than of the resident and subtly wrong, even when it is kind. At present we have scarcely any inducements to offer these young men and women to stay at home. The county libraries would not attract them to-day as they did 25 years ago, yet if Irish country life is to be resurrected from the slough into which it has fallen, they should be asked to play a part, they should be made welcome and given a living wage.

The appointments should be made with realism. It is obvious that there is no resistance whatever to Anglo-Saxon ways of thought but the most grovelling capitulation. Therefore, when appointments are made, those who love Ireland and who also love the English language and have no inhibitions about it, ought not to stand back or be overlooked because they are Anglo-Irish.

I doubt whether a detailed consideration of library reform is at present so necessary as a correct diagnosis of the disease of the library system. Flexibility is probably its chief need. Good books with a librarian who loved them and believed in them in control, those are the first essentials as Plunkett and A.E. once prescribed. But the librarian must feel that he has the support of his colleagues, of a central coordinating committee and of the various cultural organisations in the capital, whose interests he can forward in the countryside. In this way the libraries might soon begin to realize the high hopes that were once held for them.



## EDMUND DULAC



# Yeats, as I Knew Him

(A Talk given before the Irish Literary Society, London.  
19th November, 1948)

IT is always difficult to present the figure of a great man in its true light. Facts about him are distorted or misunderstood either to encourage hero-worship or to satisfy personal dislike. A figure of Yeats' size and character was bound to be particularly misunderstood. And it is because I had for long years the privilege of being one of his intimate friends that I would like to try to present a picture of him that would put some of these facts in their proper perspective.

Many people who otherwise admire him as a poet look upon him as a dreamer, playing with Occultism and symbols in order to impress his public, and in some ways as a poseur, even as a bit of a snob. He was, in fact, none of these things.

When I first met him round about 1912 he naturally appeared to me as the Great Poet with all his characteristic mannerisms: the slow, deliberate gait, the hand raised in a gesture between a salute and an episcopal blessing, the intoning delivery that seemed to some people to be pure affectation. But I felt that with a man who could write as he did, who could talk as he did, who, in conversation, displayed such subtle culture and had otherwise such naturally gentle manners, all that could not be mere posturing, and the first superficial impression soon gave way to a feeling of sympathy which, by good fortune, I found to be mutual. We had in common many intellectual and aesthetic interests so that, presently, we became close friends, and our friendship, which grew more and more intimate as time went on, lasted till the end of his life, that is more than twenty-five years. And it is because, throughout those years, I had occasion to see him from many different angles that I feel I can give what I believe to be the true interpretation of his so-called pose and affectation.

This world being a stage, we all need, in order to act our part, a background and an audience, especially if we are artists, poets or public figures.

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But there is a great difference between acting a part for the benefit of the gallery and *living it for the sake of one's soul*.

What I particularly want to emphasize is that *Yeats did not act a part for the benefit of the gallery*. It was more the gallery and the background that played a part, and an important one, in the whole of his make-up. They were the necessary condition of his intellectual and poetic life. He did not act to please a certain audience or to intrigue and impress by the use of symbols and other occult practices. He did not frequent aristocratic circles out of snobbery. His work, as well as his life, were characterized by a very marked sense of design. I don't know much about poetry but I don't think I am far wrong in saying that Yeats' poetry is, in the main, based on images and patterns. If he took an interest in occultism, in symbols and in astrology, if he had a love of ritual, if he liked aristocratic culture, it was because he was always looking for a design into which he could fit the world, his life, his emotions and in consequence, his work.

Let us take first his interest in symbols. I think I ought to say here a few words about Occultism that may help to explain what it meant to Yeats.

The fundamental principle of Occultism was that there existed a close correspondence between the Universe and man. The nature, structure and mechanism of the Universe could be understood by reference to the nature, structure and mechanism of man's body and mind.

The same laws governed both the Universe and Man, for they were built on the same plan. If man, then, could analyse and codify these laws by reference to what he knew of his own life and behaviour, he would understand the mysteries of the World round him and have power over it.

The process of analysis consisted in classifying various objects and phenomena under headings represented by signs and symbols expressing in simplified form the essence and nature of various groups of objects and phenomena.

The process of codification consisted in the elaboration of formulas and rituals based on the analogy between certain words and certain gestures and the nature of the symbols used in the performance of those rituals.

That is: formulas and symbols associated by analogy with the purpose of a ritual helped the performers to concentrate their minds upon one idea and guided and controlled their behaviour in the realization of that purpose. It followed that if you evoked a symbol you had in hand a key to all the facts associated with it and you thereby acquired knowledge. If you

performed a ritual you actually gave life to the symbols, identified yourself with the mode of action of the facts connected with them, and thereby acquired power.

In a sense Symbolism can be said to have been the first attempt at a coherent system of classification, and Occultism to have been the earliest form of scientific investigation.

There is no need to go further into the infinitely complicated details of the general theory of Occultism. What is of interest here is the psychological effect of its practices and why they appealed to Yeats.

These practices no doubt produced and still produce results. The believer attributes such results to the *objective magic power* of the symbols evoked and of the formulas, talismans and secret rites connected with them.

Nowadays we prefer the more acceptable explanation that occult practices are capable of inducing a state of mind in which the power to concentrate upon one idea is greatly increased. It is that concentration upon one idea that symbols and rituals help to achieve. For they awaken in the mind only those associations which are essentially related to the idea they represent, and they cause them to flow in the same one direction. This state of high concentration does produce mental—and sometimes physical—reactions that are more harmonious, more powerful and more effective than if they were awakened by a chance stimulus and left without direction or control. In fact the magic power of symbols and rituals comes not from *without* but from *within*. And it is this subjective, psychological side of Occultism that I want to emphasize when considering Yeats' attitude to it. Unlike the true believers he never looked upon it as an end but as a means to an end. His aim was not to exercise magical power, but to enrich his ideas and philosophic concepts and organize them in poetic form. This does not mean that he evoked symbols or performed rituals before he wrote his poems, but that his very keen interest in those things had created habits of mind where ideas had the same power as the symbols to stimulate and crystallize only those associations which were vital to the expression of an idea. Being gifted with a particularly intense imagination, his associations were particularly rich and abundant. His habit of concentration on the symbolic form of an idea had the effect of awaking in his mind a coherent pattern of rare images, analogies and words that gave his expression a quality of unexpected and apt strangeness which sharpened and deepened its meaning.

It is for analogous reasons that Yeats took such an interest in psychic phenomena and in astrology. I say such an interest

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because, again, I am convinced that he never believed in them in the way that many people of less acute intelligence and less original imagination believe in them. That interest was to him an intellectual and emotional necessity and not a means of satisfying a sentimental curiosity or a semi-religious yearning.

It is a subtle distinction, but I think you will understand if you consider that, as in Occultism, the concentration of our subconscious activities on an object external to ourselves guides and facilitates their working. In every respect this is a well recognised psychological fact. In other words, Yeats' belief in spirits or in astrological predictions was not the belief of a blind faith but was the measure of the intellectual help his form of belief gave him.

He did not take the orthodox spiritualist theories at their face value; in fact he had no use for them. The explanations he gave of psychic phenomena in his writings and also in private conversation were naturally expressed in a language that was more poetic than scientific. But fundamentally they amounted to this: that they were all the result of some sort of exteriorization of subconscious activities that were purely subjective.

As far back as 1917 I went with him and our friend Sir Denison Ross to investigate a certain machine invented by a man called Wilson who had worked with Sir William Crookes. Mr. Wilson's idea was that, through a combination of chemical substances, the machine acted as a link between himself and the minds of living or disembodied entities. It was operated through earphones and an eye-piece, both conveying messages in code to Mr. Wilson. The phenomenon and communications that took place on that memorable afternoon were some of them curious but were on the whole unconvincing. Now what I want you to note is that in our subsequent conversations, Yeats remarked that very likely Mr. Wilson had some peculiar gifts but could not produce any phenomena without the help of his machine. He did not believe in the machine as such, but as an indispensable focussing point for Mr. Wilson's subconscious activities.

It is on this help given by a form of exteriorization of our subconscious that I must insist. Had Yeats not attributed to the spirits some sort of objective reality he would not have had the insight, the freedom and the confidence which prompted him to write some of his works—notably the "Vision." You all know how this was inspired by messages delivered through the mediumship of Mrs. Yeats. The entities that were supposed to be sending the messages were, however, of the vaguest kind. He called them THEY or The Teachers. They were



never the disembodied spirits of dead people. Following Jung and the Yogis, he hinted more than once at an explanation of such messages on the lines of a Universal Subconscious, the centre of which is in every man. Every man, therefore, could in certain conditions, in certain states, have access to that Universal Subconsciousness and thereby enlarge and develop a knowledge that was already within himself in elementary form. The knowledge expounded in the "Vision" certainly existed already in elementary form in the minds of Yeats and of his wife, and the spiritual teachers acting as external points of crystallization for their subconscious activities helped to bring out that knowledge and to elaborate it. Yeats actually said as much when the "Vision" was published in its final form. In the Introduction he says: "Much has happened, much that has been said, suggests that the communicators are the personalities of a dream shared by my wife, by myself, occasionally by others—they have, as I must some day prove, spoken through others without change of knowledge or loss of power—a dream that can take objective form in sounds, in hallucinations, in scents, in flashes of light, in movements of external objects." In the preface to the play "Words on the Window-pane," he says another very significant thing: "At most séances the suggestions come from subconscious or unspoken thought." He also often spoke of a *dramatisation created* by the medium's subconscious. That is enough, I think, to show that in his psychic experiments Yeats was looking for something infinitely more subtle, infinitely more intelligent than what the crude believer expects from séances or table-turning.

As for astrology, it has what I would call a decorative quality that appealed to his romantic side and to his sense of pattern. In practice it stimulated his imagination, it enabled him to create certain states of mind, and by the way, to come to decisions which, I am sure, were already settled in his subconscious, but about which his consciousness still hesitated. More than once I have known him make calculations to ascertain a particular aspect of planets that would foretell an event I knew he had foreseen already, or apprehended. On one occasion I even helped him to make an important decision. I had, on his instructions, designed what is called a Planisphere of his horoscope. In the ordinary horoscope the movements of the planets are along the curved lines of an imaginary globe of which the native is the centre. This, to Yeats, who was not very good at calculating arcs of circle or even at ordinary arithmetic, was very inconvenient. The Planisphere has the great advantage of being a projection of the celestial globe on

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the flat; something like what is called in Geography a Mercator Projection. Arcs of circles become straight lines and can be measured with a ruler. We spent a whole evening measuring, comparing, before he found the appropriate aspect. "That settles it!" he cried. But judging from the long conversations we had had on the subject in the course of the previous two or three days, what had been settled had been going on in his mind for some time past and, no doubt unconsciously, he thought it the best solution to his present problem. He might as well have tossed a coin, but it wouldn't have been so much fun, and the coin might have fallen the wrong way up. Here I may say that his opinion of the average spiritualist, occultist and astrologer was very qualified. He used to say: "I hate an astrologer, I don't trust him, when he is Noble!" meaning when he uses the kind of high falutin' jargon that impresses the masses. As I said, his use of magic formulas and symbols was not an indulgence in mumbo-jumbo but a means of creating a state of mind. One day, when I was ill, I saw him with his hand half raised and his lips moving. He told me what he was doing and gave me some symbols to concentrate upon. That is to say he was trying to give me external points on which to focus my attention. As I have already suggested, the virtue of spells and talismans is a purely subjective one. They induce a state of auto-suggestion which can be of great help—a method not very different from the method used in some cases by our modern psychotherapists. And again Yeats was quite aware of that. I hope I have made it clear that his attitude towards these subjects was very different indeed from the attitude of, let us say, Sir Oliver Lodge on the one hand, and that of a man like Alastair Crowley on the other.

As far as the aristocratic circles he frequented are concerned, they were, as I have said, also essential to his background. It was clearly not out of snobbery that he cultivated such connections. They had to fulfill very definite conditions of good manners, culture and behaviour, in fact they had to contribute to the ritualistic part of the picture, although he did not mind sometimes exaggerating their virtues to himself in order that they should fit better. If he had any snobbery in another sense, it was about the peasant—the Irish peasant especially—or the man of the people. In the ideal world that he was constantly trying to construct round him there would have been a Court entirely composed of clever, refined and brilliant people, where artists would have occupied a prominent position. The artists would have been in a sense initiates, following ancient traditions. They would have been helped in their work by the peasant or

the man of the people, who would have been the craftsmen, the players or the musicians. He found however, in practice, that he could only realise a very thin substitute for a Court, but he never lost the hope of creating a body of craftsmen to weave beautiful fabrics or decorative tapestries, and of forming companies recruited from the farms and the shops of the village. And he succeeded in this to a great extent when he founded the Abbey Theatre. All his life he dreamt of musicians who could be trained to chant verse in some kind of primitive style. For he hated the ordinary professional singer with such passion that it led to the one and only quarrel—a brief one—we had in the course of our long friendship.

All this was the inevitable condition of the part he liked to play to himself in relation to a background that was as necessary to him as formulas, test-tubes and retorts are to a scientist. One cannot in any way call that a pose. A pose is something that is put on for the occasion. A poseur is an entirely artificial person. The true poseur either never drops his pose before his friends—for fear of being thought a humbug—or if he drops his pose the whole of what he is supposed to be disappears with it.

But with Yeats the whole of what he was, and the whole of what I have called his background, his interest in mysteries, his ideals, remained precisely the same whether he was among intimates or before one of his audiences. Before his public he was, as I suggested, acting the part of the poet at Court and went through the ritualistic gestures, intonations and pronouncements that were in keeping with the part. But this kind of ritualism was not necessary with his intimate friends. His friends were not part of his audience, they were with him behind the stage, associated, not only by a community of interests, but also by bonds of human sympathy.

And I may say that I seldom found sympathy so sincere, so real and so simply and kindly expressed. There were, naturally, many occasions when I had to ask him to spend an evening with people who were eager to meet him. Not only he never refused but he went out of his way to be entertaining without pontificating, and to make my friends feel quite at home with him, especially when the friends were people of no particular importance. It happened sometimes that I would arrange these meetings in order to dispel the impression that he was the self-absorbed, aloof person they thought he was. I only needed to hint at what I expected of him and he would make it a point to take a personal interest in the people concerned and to keep them amused with a series of his priceless



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anecdotes just as if he were himself an ordinary man. It also happened that some people were shy or too excited in the presence of the Great Man, and there were moments when things became not a little embarrassing. But Yeats was never embarrassed or annoyed and showed always, on such occasions, the most extraordinary patience. One night I had arranged for an American who wrote poetry of sorts and his wife to dine with Yeats at a favourite restaurant. The American was one of his passionate admirers and it had been the dream of his life to meet him. That man and his poetry could never have interested Yeats in the least. Nevertheless, he talked as he could talk when he was in good form, and as the dinner went on the American became more and more excited; at last he could hold out no longer; he put out his head, half closed his eyes and very solemnly said: "Now Mr. Yeats. Won't you give me a message from your heart?" Yeats was rather taken aback, and in the silence that followed, the American gentleman's wife, who had taken only a distant interest in the poet, was heard to remark to my wife: "You see. The trouble with all that rich Continental food is that it makes one apt to suffer from congestion of the lower intestine." "What's that?" said Yeats. But he did not turn a hair, and went on talking. Whether what he said could be considered as the message expected I don't know, but when the dinner was over and we had said goodnight, Yeats turned to me and whispered: "Was that all right? Did I do it well?" Some time after, he remarked in a letter, speaking of the dinner: "That American saint or Yogi of yours sounded too friendly and beautiful. . ."

Another time the guest was a very dear man I was very fond of, who was intelligent, cultured and a good poet. But he was also abnormally shy, and in order to brace himself for the meeting with the Great Poet he had worshipped all his life, he had taken a little stimulant, and the cocktails served before dinner were unfortunately just too much for him. However, we sat down, and Yeats pretended not to notice that there was anything wrong. Before the coffee, thinking that poetry might have a beneficial effect on the condition of our friend, might so to speak, wake him out of his trance, I asked Yeats to recite the last poem he had written and had read to us a day or so before. It was "The Curse of Cromwell." He did not have the lines with him, but said he would do his best to remember. So he started:

"You ask what I have found and far and wide I go  
Nothing but Cromwell's house and Cromwell's murderous crew.  
The——"

"Atchoo!" went our friend.



Yeats was cut short. "I forget what comes next," he said. "Wait a moment." He paused and then went on:

"The lovers and the dancers are beaten into the clay——"

"Atchoo!" went our friend.

The line was lost again. Yeats brushed his hair back once or twice. After another pause he found it:

"And there is an old beggar wandering in his pride——"

"Atchoo!" went our friend.

After the next sneeze Yeats had completely lost the hang of the poem. He shut his eyes for a moment and said: "I'll start all over again," and to the accompaniment of no less than seventeen sneezes, he managed to get through. Anyone else would have not only given up in despair, but been extremely offended. We are all, naturally, rather embarrassed, except our friend who was too far gone and could only mumble: "Mr. Yeats. I have now realized one of my greatest desires," and collapsed. Yeats patted him on the shoulder and smiled as if nothing had happened.

I always described Yeats as a fine example of what is called a gentleman. He was a gentleman, not only in behaviour but in intellect, in feeling and in taste, and he was *not* what many people thought: a *dreamer* in spite of his Romantic appearance, his head sometimes in the clouds, sometimes bent in deep thought. I can think of no one who looked so much like the traditional poet and who, when one knew him better was, in fact, less dreamy, less distant. He never indulged in strangeness for the sake of strangeness, his fantasy was never fantastic. He was precise, punctual and meticulous in his manners, in his dress, and, as everybody knows, in his work. He never missed a train; he never fell under a bus or into a pond. No doubt he could be very absorbed in his thoughts or in his talk, but he had what I would call a curious faculty of subconscious attention. I have seen him of an evening holding forth to a gathering of people most of whom he had never seen before, and apparently completely engrossed in his subject. Yet, if later I happened to mention some particular person who was present: "Oh! yes," he would say, "the fellow with the fair hair and the pink tie." When he came to stay with me in the country we would often go for a walk before dinner. Sometimes, in the early winter, we had to walk in pitch darkness along lanes that were soaked with rain. Yeats would invariably come back with his shoes spotless. I was spattered with mud to the knees.

His method of work was certainly not that of the conventional dreamy, romantic poet, who is supposed to rattle off his lines

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in a frenzy of inspiration. I think everybody knows that now. Writing a poem was with him a long and careful job. A phrase, even a word, sometimes a picture would suddenly awake an echo in his mind and start a train of associations going. These had to be sifted, carefully chosen, arranged so as to form a particular pattern. While this was going on he would pace up and down the room with measured step, or sit beating his knee with one hand and muttering the phrase or the key-word over and over again like an incantation. Very often he would make a prose version of the poem before turning it into verse. The images had to have the right evocative power, the pattern into which they were woven had to have the right rhythm. That is surely not the way a dreamer works.

A couple of months ago I read in a Sunday paper a curious tribute to Yeats by Mr. James Stephens, in which he attributes the fact that Yeats had to work so hard and that he rewrote many of his poems, to what he calls "delayed knowledge," assuming, I suppose, that when first writing these poems Yeats was in some sense inhibited; he even suggests that as far as his poem "Byzantium" is concerned, he would never have been able to bring it forward from the back of his head had he lived another twenty years. I don't know quite what Mr. Stephens wished to convey by that. To my mind the last "Byzantium" is a very exciting and admirable poem, and I am convinced that it says all that Yeats wanted to say. But about the matter of rewriting, the desire to improve upon a theme, isn't this what happens to any artist who, like Yeats, possesses at the same time a creative imagination of a very rich kind and a keen critical sense? The average poet, writer or artist, especially the traditional Romantic sort who has more creative imagination than critical sense, generally considers the first flow of his inspiration to be satisfactory and final. He seldom rewrites, he often doesn't even make corrections. As he grows older his art may develop but it develops in surface, it spreads out; the subject-matter may change but the treatment remains more or less the same. With an artist like Yeats whose critical sense was very much alive, the art develops essentially in depth. There were in his mind certain themes forming part of his intellectual pattern that he would naturally recast as a new and enlarged experience enabled him to go deeper into their meaning. I think this is a view more consistent with the whole of Yeats' nature and personality than the slightly disparaging explanation given by Mr. Stephens. I am not, of course, competent to judge of the changes in Yeats' manner from the literary point of view, but I think that everyone will agree that

there have been very few poets, if any, whose style and quality of invention underwent late in life such remarkable changes in increased power, freshness and simplicity as one finds in the first volume of poems belonging to that phase: "The Winding Stair," which, by the way, I may say I am very proud to have had dedicated to me. For one who knew Yeats as well as I did and as I have attempted to describe him, this was not surprising. There were many things in his life, events, some of them well known, some less known, that were bound to have psychologically an effect on his work; but unlike Mr. Stephens I am inclined to think that the effect was more to probe deeper into realities that he had never lost sight of rather than to labour to bring to light a knowledge that was supposed to be there and that, in some cases, was for ever inhibited.

To the end he pursued this aim with more and more passion, more and more intensity. I felt at times it was with too much passion, too much intensity. He did not always agree but, nevertheless, when he was working on one of his last plays, he made many changes. On one occasion, when he was not yet quite satisfied with the results, he remarked: "Oh! well! and who am I that I should not make a fool of myself?" This remark is typical of the two moral characteristics of the man. It may have been dictated by pride, but I know it was also the expression of a very real and sincere modesty.

## BOOK REVIEWS



### AUF WIEDERSEHEN BUT NOT GOODBYE

INNISHFALLEN, FARE THEE WELL, by Sean O'Casey (*Macmillan*, 16/-).

This fourth volume of autobiographical saga relates in detail the events that led to O'Casey's quitting the Irish shore. Of the leavetaking itself he says:—

The ship turned giddily to right, to left, plunged with up-turned bows, dipping them again as quick, for there was more than a half-gale blowing. Sean had been anxious about seasickness, but he felt no discomfort. He was a good sailor. He faced resolutely towards where the ship was going. Sweet Inishfallen, fare thee well! Forever!

It is a bitter book, a fighting book; his narrative speaks eloquently of frustration, poverty, malice, enmity, meanness, backbiting. Yet there are declarations, too, that all's not foul in the sour-sweet green island; that in Dublin's fanlight-shattered slums may be found as much kindness and decency (and probably more) as in the literary pub-parlours. Pearls and Palaces I know ye not, says the bold O'Casey.

Thunder rolls on the left; the Citizen Army shadow-marches from earlier books across these pages to the boom of Connolly's oratory, to the blood-rousing skirl of the pipes, to the rapping of insolent Black-and-Tan rifle-butts on tenement doors. And O'Casey dreams through it all, through the terror and poverty and heartbreak of his mother's death and his eye affliction; and he reads hard and writes for all he's worth, until finally his name gets onto the Abbey playbills. Then the trouble starts.

But frankly, one is amazed time and again by the inward-biting mind that insists on re-wounding itself over the years by a constant brooding on things past. The old humiliations and spites were real enough, heaven knows. O'Casey still feels the poison course in his bloodstream, just where it hurts him more than it can hurt the people who arrowed that poison into a hypersensitive nature. And there seem to be one or two injustices the other way round. Was *everyone* mistaken as to A.E.'s real nature but O'Casey? Was A.E. really a *poseur* and a humbug, a misty poetaster, an insincere painter, a hypocritical philosopher, an inflated, wordy bag of hot Lurgan air? Surely such an opinion—expressed at length and with lingering rancour—is an example of sheer waywardness, a dramatic kicking aside of known facts?



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One turns with the pleasure of relief to the people young O'Casey loved and respected: Lady Gregory, of the landed gentry yet able to see more deeply into the peasantry than he ever could; for he is essentially urban; Yeats, with all his pose and pomp, a voice that spoke elegantly and with authority. And apart from a handful of the Great—the common folk, Galway peasants, the next-door neighbours in the battered tenement, the callous-handed but tender-hearted journeymen, the hard-pressed, enduring women of whom his Mother was the greatest—these he knew and championed above all others.

The attack on the Roman Catholic Church and its clergy is one that will injure O'Casey in Ireland; and it is deliberately written to give offence. Too much a Protestant, he spoils an excellent case against book censorship, against undue clerical interference in secular matters, by a sustained indictment that goes beyond the bounds of criticism. Even an Orange Belfastman, nurtured in the true-Blue-No-Surrender-to-Hell-with-the-Pope tradition, might find a sneaking sympathy grow in him for "Maynooth of the squinting windows" should he conscientiously plough through all the massive invective.

He does not mean what he says? Sound and fury? Yes and no, for O'Casey's fierce *daemon* seldom permits a *vue claire*; his emotions respond on the grand scale and too many men are seen as "either God or devil"; too many events are viewed through a wrongly-focussed lens. Yet now and then an undeniable fineness of spirit breaks out from the tangled ideas, reflecting the basic greatness of the man. There is, too, a passionate insistence on human dignity; but one sees no trace of humour in personal relationships, no hint of forgiveness. If O'Casey could only forgive a little, how superlatively great he might be! And if he could forget a little, how happy!

ROBERT GREACEN.

### 'ET TOUT LE RESTE EST LITTÉRATURE'

CONTEMPORARY IRISH POETRY: Edited by Robert Greacen & Valentin Iremonger. (Faber, 8/6).

The world has been assured of late that Ireland has no new writers. The announcer of these mournful tidings may not include poets in the term 'writers'—mindful of Verlaine's cold cutting-off of poetry—'*Et tout le reste est littérature.*' Poets may not be called singers, either. When Shaw in his Unsocial Socialist has his musician say: 'Anyone can make the piano sing; the difficulty is to make it speak,' he puts the spirit of modern art in a phrase.

This new Anthology is a delightful book. True, the mind

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leaps to Patrick Kavanagh; but evidently he prefers to keep the lone furrow. I should have liked to see Mary Devenport O'Neill included, also Temple Lane, who has written some very beautiful poems. Yet, we can toss the head proudly, realising that we have even more good poets who have had to be crowded out.

Most of the thirty-four poets represented in this cross-section of contemporary Irish verse are very young men. The collection shows remarkable variety—from Austin Clarke's dark sonorous 'Tenebrae,' and the granite strength of Donagh MacDonagh's 'The Veterans,' to the wild robust exhilaration of Padraic Fallon. 'Rafferty's Dialogue with the Whiskey' is indeed of the West:

Troy in its tall sticks never burned with a blaze  
As bright as Rafferty's hairs when that evil spark  
Leaped on his skull and from that holy roof-tree  
Pitchforked his spluttering thatch.

Keats writes to a friend: '. . . it struck me what quality went to form a man of achievement, especially in literature, and which Shakespeare possessed so enormously—I mean *negative capability*, that is, when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason.' Poetry often runs astray chasing after a thought. Louis MacNeice's music is sure, his rhythm malleable, his touch light, his philosophy subdued to its medium:

For we are obsolete who like the lesser things  
Who play in corners with looking-glasses and beads;  
It is better we should go quickly, go into Asia  
Or any other tunnel where the world recedes,  
Or turn blind wantons like the gulls who scream  
And rip the edge off any ideal or dream.

Happily, there is little, if any, narcissus poetry in this book. Maurice Craig's five pieces show how complete a poet he is. Iremonger is finely lyrical in 'Lackendarragh.' One is glad to come upon Greacen's well-known Poem 'The Bird.' Daiken's verse runs, as ever, clear, bearing along bright-coloured images. Pearse Hutchinson is an extremely interesting poet, who also writes good *modern* verse in Gaelic. It may be my defect that I am unable to respond to Nick Nicholls' 'The Bone and the Flower': I like his pictures. Rhoda Coghill is represented by two magical poems.

W. R. Rodgers' 'Christ Walking on the Water' is, by any standards, a great poem. We also find his:

And hark, the lark sarcastic sings  
To Icarus without his wings  
Dawdling down the sky,

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Indolent aeons have gone to make  
Its gimlet bill, its song-gills' shake,  
Its all-containing cry.

Just poetry. Something that quickens the pulse.

BLANAID SALKELD.

*THE THREE BROTHERS*, by Michael McLaverty (*Jonathan Cape, 9/-*).

*MY LOVE TO THE GALLOWS*, by Rearden Conner (*MacDonald & Co., 9/6*).

The smooth, strong swell of a rising tide, a sense of being carried forward by it, a sense of rest so absolute, so complete that one's faculty of perception deepens and grows rich,—this was my experience when reading Michael McLaverty's latest book. It may happen sometimes when out boating on a river, being rowed, that one suddenly becomes aware of a precious quality in every tiny object gliding by; this is the import of *The Three Brothers*, an unusual book in many ways. Of the three middle-aged men round whom the story centres not one is, at first encounter, the slightest bit exciting, and yet, before long all that concerns them becomes of more than ordinary interest. Their ordinary lives, their critical views of one another, their mutual disapproval: each man's determination to keep his own superiority, each man's denial to his brother of a too great regard—all this told with the impelling force of the author's secret—the sacredness of every human life. Gradually we come to realise that the whole world is typified by those three brothers. One,—John—is married, and much engrossed in the questions of young people around him (the career of a wayward son, the love-story of a daughter) but not unmindful of his brothers, Bob and D.J., bachelors both, one a wastrel and a charmer, the other a miser, selfish, suspicious—and a delight to read of! Truly in depicting Bob Caffrey a master's work has been done! Perhaps McLaverty's greatest gift is ironic humour blended with reverence for all creatures.

Bob Caffrey has been left the small drapery in Monabeg which was once owned by his father. But not for his father's memory, nor for his brothers, nor the devoted half-sister Nelly has he any thoughts of affection. All sympathy is fostered on himself,—and yet the man is lovable! We first see him on a bleak, snowy morning outside his shop.

"He stooped to clear away the snow from the door: he had

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mitten on his hands, and as he shovelled away at the snow he did so with his left hand, for he still felt a numbing stiffness in his right. Now and again as he heaped the snow at the kerb he would stand for a minute in the silence of the street looking at the closed doors and at the solid row of houses, aware that they shut out the view of the snow-covered fields that lay hushed and remote spreading their way across dark hedges. . . . There was no sound in the street except that of his shovel, and far down the line the shunting of a train, and at the back of the house the unnoticed sound of the falls continually unrolling their polished web of cold falling water. No one was astir in the village except himself."

And later we see him awaiting the arrival of his brother and his niece . . . suspicious, doubtful. . .

"He stood within the door of his shop, the leaf of his hat jutting beyond the jamb . . . He certainly wouldn't walk from his door till he'd see his visitors, for you never could tell who'd be peering out from an upstairs window and laugh at your disappointment."

Already "he had the snow cleared from around the window where there was a pebbled design of a peacock in the path below it. He sniffed contemptuously at the clear-cut cleanliness of the peacock, and he thought of the foolishness of his father, squandering money on a piece of decoration that the people walked over and spat upon."

In Ireland we do not rush out with open arms to greet a genius. We are, I think, slow to acclaim, but once awakened we do not forget. There are some of us who notice a slowness in this country with regard to Michael McLaverty. America—through leading critics—has acclaimed him, I think we will not for much longer lag behind.

Only a little time ago we were all listening to discussion on the dangerous effect of 'crime pictures' to children in particular. From time to time the question crops up 'how much harm is done?' So great an authority (if level-headedness and wide humour give authority in to-day's world) as G. K. Chesterton once boldly declared that murder stories are good moral pills.

Be that as it may, *My Love to the Gallows* deals with the question of danger to the writer, not the reader, of crime stories. Mr. Rearden Conner has written many books, and knows well how to win sympathy for the young, hard-hit man. Mark Loran, no mean creature, has much to endure, not the least of his trials being the wearisome fellow-lodgers who will keep on talking. And here it must be admitted that the author has not yet mastered the art of exposing stupidity without



## BOOK REVIEWS

irking his readers; much of the lodging-house conversation might be omitted. But Mark holds our interest to the end, and what that end is may not be divulged, for *My Love to the Gallows* is a story which demands confidential treatment.

TERESA DEEVY.

*VACANT POSSESSION*, by Walter Macken. (Macmillan, 6/-).

Walter Macken reveals a nice turn for resounding dialogue. As I read the play I could see it in action. The author grew up in the Galway Gaelic Theatre, graduating from small parts till he became leading player, producer, dramatist and pivotal personality. He has gained a reputation as an Abbey actor and dramatist since. So it is not surprising that there is a sense of theatre in his work.

*Vacant Possession* is the story of a group of incongruous characters who occupy an abandoned ruin called the Gantry and stay there till the Demolition Order is carried out. Here is "Fixit" Maloney, who takes the lead, the "Gunner" with his wooden leg, his wife, Maggie, and their grown-up son, the Chicken. There is, too, a youthful crook and his girl friend; a genteel old wanderer, the Gabbler, and a fierce ruffian known as "Revenge" Horgan, who is fighting mad because Fixit owes him three weeks rent, which comes to nine shillings. Fixit describes him as "An inimy a the people! The fella that wants to ate me kidneys." Another would-be belligerent—the Dummy—only arouses Fixit's pitying contempt which he expresses thus: "Go on, yeh pinkeen, yeh couldn't wallop a pound of liver in a jam-jar!" Those modern pundits who want every character to talk like a professor would doubtless call this 'stage Irish.'

In the Gantry we not only listen to picturesque abuse. It is a microcosm of humanity. Hypocrisy and loyalty jostle, there is the mean sneak thief and the generous friend. The drunken Gunner comes to a tragic end and the demolition gang rubs out the Gantry. I wish Macken had brought his less eccentric characters—such as Maggie—more to the front. Here, as in "Mungo's Mansion" he reveals that he can handle such characters with feeling but he lavishes most of his attention on the flamboyant ruffians. *Vacant Possession* does not convey—in its title—the full, warm, human content of this play. So far it has not been seen on the Irish stage. Surely we have not so many dramatists so well equipped to express Western life that it should remain un-staged?

R. M. FOX.

## IRISH WRITING

THE FLOWERING SHAMROCK, by Sheila Pim. (Hodder & Stoughton, 8/6)

A merry heart goes all the way  
Your sad tires in a mile a . . .

Sheila Pim keeps her reader smiling from the first word to the last. It would be easy to dismiss *The Flowering Shamrock* as a pleasant story, very amusingly written. But although it is a most entertaining book, there is more to say about it than that. The author shows an alert mind, justness of observation, a pretty wit—and above all, a noble impartiality. She knocks all who have sensibilities (and who in Ireland has not?) sharply over the knuckles. But, noting that all, friend and foe alike, receive a rap—where Miss Pim sees the light punishment is called for—it comes easier to each to bear the sting. The title '*The Flowering Shamrock*' is symbolic. The story is of the slightest. One of the characters, Hermione, is in search of the real Irish—or, what sounds better,—of the true Gael. We come across every shade of political opinion. We meet every class and condition of people. The visitor is taken in their company to the shops, to picnics, to election meetings and ceillidhes.

"The step dances fascinated her. She decided that there must be a clue to the national character in the way the performers fixed their gaze immovably on some distant horizon as if determined to disassociate themselves from any responsibility for the complicated evolutions performed by their feet."

On our merry jaunt with Hermione, we visit distinct and easily recognisable circles of the Inferno which is our life. Miss Pim puts a bright face upon reality; but she is quite conscious of the substance of reality.

One critic, considering the author, is reminded of the vivacious wall-lizard. To me she recalls Hokusai, "the old man mad about drawing"—for she never tires of sketching for us, direct from life, the pose, gesture, habits of the people in her story. Her skill is such that they are made clear to us all the time. Her understanding of their minds and motives is complete: the searchlight flashes into recesses of their being—and she makes no mistakes.

It does not appear to matter that the story is thin: the book seems rather a chronicle than a story. The love interest in it is happily negligible. Irish people are by nature reticent in these matters. Perhaps for this very reason, our novelists are prone to exaggerate—even to caricature, the tender passion. No doubt, a lofty theme—heroic happenings and rare individuals—would do greater justice to Sheila Pim's genius. Yet one must not be ungrateful. She wished to entertain us, and certainly she has succeeded in doing so.

BLANAID SALKELD.



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Edited by **ROBERT HERRING**

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## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

**J. F. REYNOLDS:** Born Dublin, 1922. Is a clerk in the Dublin Corporation. Has had stories and articles published in "The Bell" and other Irish magazines. Won the recent Radio Eireann Short Story Competition.

**JAMES PLUNKETT:** Born Dublin, 1920.—Is secretary of the Workers' Union of Ireland. His stories have appeared widely in this country and in Britain.

**ROY McFADDEN:** Born Belfast, 1921. Has published three volumes of poetry, and is co-editor of "Rann," the Ulster poetry quarterly. Is a lawyer by profession.

**MICHAEL J. MURPHY:** Born Liverpool, 1913, of South Armagh peasant stock. Returned to Armagh in 1922. Is a collector for the Irish Folklore Commission and lives in a mountain-cabin doing free-lance writing. His work has appeared in "The Bell," "Dublin Magazine," etc., and has been broadcast from the B.B.C.

**PADRAIC COLUM:** Born Longford, 1881. Is one of the leading figures in contemporary Irish literature. Lives in New York.

**HUBERT BUTLER:** Born Kilkenny, 1900. Has translated novels, plays, etc., from Russian and Serbo-Croatian and has broadcast on Slavonic themes from Radio Eireann and the Third Programme, B.B.C.

**EDMUND DULAC:** Born Toulouse, 1882. Designed the 1937 Coronation Stamp. Arranged the music for one of Yeats' poetry broadcasts from the B.B.C. in 1937, and was the designer of the masks and costumes for "At the Hawk's Well" when it was first performed in 1916.

**MAURICE KENNEDY:** Born Youghal, Co. Cork, in 1924. Is in the Civil Service and has been writing for about ten years. Has previously had work in "The Dublin Magazine."

**PETER HILL:** Born Dublin, 1924. Is a graduate of Dublin University and recently qualified as a barrister. This is his first publication.

**RICHARD KELL:** Born Co. Cork, 1927. Spent five years in India, was then educated in Belfast and Dublin, and is now a student in Trinity College, Dublin. Has had poetry in "The Bell," "Irish Times," "Rann," and "Poetry Ireland."

**DENIS DEVLIN:** Born Scotland, 1908. Was educated at University College, Dublin, and at Paris University. Has published "Intercessions," London, 1938; "Lough Derg," New York, 1947; and "Exile," (translations from St. John Perse) New York, 1949.